United Nations S/PV.4701

Security Council

Fifty-eighth year

Provisional

4701st meeting

Wednesday, 5 February 2003, 10.15 a.m.

New York

President:	Mr. Fischer	(Germany)
Members:	Angola	Mr. Chikoti
	Bulgaria	Mr. Passy
	Cameroon	Mr. Ngoubeyou
	Chile	Mrs. Alvear Valenzuela
	China	Mr. Tang Jiaxuan
	France	Mr. Galouzeau de Villepin
	Guinea	Mr. Traoré
	Mexico	Mr. Derbez
	Pakistan	Mr. Kasuri
	Russian Federation	Mr. Ivanov
	Spain	Ms. Palacio Vallelersundi
	Syrian Arab Republic	Mr. Wehbe
	United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland	Mr. Straw
	United States of America	Mr. Powell

Agenda

The situation between Iraq and Kuwait

This record contains the text of speeches delivered in English and of the interpretation of speeches delivered in the other languages. The final text will be printed in the *Official Records of the Security Council*. Corrections should be submitted to the original languages only. They should be incorporated in a copy of the record and sent under the signature of a member of the delegation concerned to the Chief of the Verbatim Reporting Service, room C-154A.

03-23600 (E)

The meeting was called to order at 10.35 a.m.

Adoption of the agenda

The agenda was adopted.

The situation between Iraq and Kuwait

The President: I should like to inform the Council that I have received a letter from the representative of Iraq in which he requests to be invited to participate in the discussion of the item on the Council's agenda. In conformity with the usual practice, I propose, with the consent of the Council, to invite that representative to participate in the discussion, without the right to vote, in accordance with the relevant provisions of the Charter and rule 37 of the Council's provisional rules of procedure.

There being no objection, it is so decided.

At the invitation of the President, Mr. Aldouri (Iraq) took a seat at the Council table.

The President: I welcome the presence of the Secretary-General, Mr. Kofi Annan, at this meeting. I also welcome the presence of Mr. Hans Blix, Executive Chairman of the United Nations Monitoring, Verification and Inspection Commission, and Mr. Mohamed ElBaradei, Director General of the International Atomic Energy Agency. Members of the Council who wish to address questions to Mr. Blix and Mr. ElBaradei are invited to do so at the luncheon to be held following the adjournment of this meeting.

The Security Council will now begin its consideration of the item on its agenda.

The purpose of this meeting is to hear a presentation by the United States. In order for us to work within our timetable, participants are urged to speak for no longer than seven minutes.

I call on His Excellency Mr. Colin Powell, Secretary of State of the United States of America.

Mr. Powell (United States of America): I would like to begin by expressing my thanks for the special effort that each of you made to be here today. This is an important day for us all as we review the situation with respect to Iraq and its disarmament obligations under Security Council resolution 1441 (2002).

Last 8 November, the Council passed resolution 1441 (2002) by a unanimous vote. The purpose of that resolution was to disarm Iraq of its weapons of mass destruction. Iraq had already been found guilty of material breach of its obligations stretching back over 16 previous resolutions and 12 years. Resolution 1441 (2002) was not dealing with an innocent party, but with a regime that the Council had repeatedly convicted over the years. Resolution 1441 (2002) gave Iraq one last chance to come into compliance or to face serious consequences. No Council member present and voting on that day had any illusions about the nature and intent of the resolution or about what "serious consequences" meant if Iraq did not comply.

To assist in its disarmament, we called on Iraq to cooperate with returning inspectors from the United Nations Monitoring, Verification and Inspection Commission (UNMOVIC) and the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA). We laid down tough standards for Iraq to meet, to allow the inspectors to do their job. The Council placed the burden on Iraq to comply and disarm, and not on the inspectors to find that which Iraq has gone out of its way to conceal for so long. Inspectors are inspectors; they are not detectives.

I asked for this meeting today for two purposes: first, to support the core assessments made by Mr. Blix and Mr. ElBaradei. As Mr. Blix reported to the Council on 27 January,

> " ... Iraq appears not to have come to a genuine acceptance — not even today — of the disarmament that was demanded of it". (*S/PV.4692, p. 3*)

And as Mr. ElBaradei reported, Iraq's declaration of 7 December

> " ... did not provide any new information relevant to certain questions that have been outstanding since 1998". (*ibid., p. 10*)

My second purpose today is to provide you with additional information and to share with you what the United States knows about Iraq's weapons of mass destruction as well Iraq's involvement in terrorism, which is also the subject of resolution 1441 (2002) and other, earlier, resolutions. I might add, at this point, that we are providing all the relevant information we can to the inspections teams, for them to do their work.

The material I will present to you comes from a variety of sources. Some are United States sources and some are those of other countries. Some of the sources

are technical, such as intercepted telephone conversations and photos taken by satellites. Other sources are people who have risked their lives to let the world know what Saddam Hussain is really up to. I cannot tell you everything that we know. But what I can share with you, when combined with what all of us have learned over the years, is deeply troubling. What you will see is an accumulation of facts and disturbing patterns of behaviour. The facts and Iraq's behaviour demonstrate that Saddam Hussain and his regime have made no effort to disarm as required by the international community. Indeed, the facts and Iraq's behaviour show that Saddam Hussain and his regime are concealing their efforts to produce more weapons of mass destruction.

Let me begin by playing a tape for you. What you are about to hear is a conversation that my Government monitored. It took place on 26 November 2002, on the day before United Nations teams resumed inspections in Iraq. The conversation involves two senior officers, a colonel and a brigadier general from Iraq's elite military unit, the Republican Guard.

An audio tape, in Arabic, was played in the Council Chamber; an English translation provided by the United States delegation was projected on screen in the Chamber.

Colonel: Peace. We just have a small question.

Brigadier General: Yeah.

Colonel: About this committee that is coming.

Brigadier General: Yeah, yeah.

Colonel: ... with Mohamed ElBaradei.

Brigadier General: Yeah. Yeah.

Colonel: Yeah.

Brigadier General: Yeah?

Colonel: We have this modified vehicle.

Brigadier General: Yeah.

Colonel: What do we say if one of them sees it?

Brigadier General: You didn't get a modified ... you don't have a modified ...

Colonel: By God, I have one.

Brigadier General: Which? From the workshop ... ?

Colonel: From the Al-Kindi Company.

Brigadier General: What?

Colonel: From Al-Kindi.

Brigadier General: Yeah, yeah. I'll come to you in the morning. I have some comments. I'm worried you all have something left.

Colonel: We evacuated everything. We don't have anything left.

Brigadier General: I will come to you tomorrow.

Colonel: OK.

Brigadier General: I have a conference at headquarters. Before I attend the conference I will come to you.

Mr. Powell (United States of America): Let me pause to review some of the key elements of the conversation you have just heard between the two officers. First, they acknowledge that our colleague, Mohamed ElBaradei is coming. They know what he is coming for and they know he is coming the next day. He is coming to look for things that are prohibited. He is expecting those gentlemen to cooperate with him and not hide things. But they are worried: "We have this modified vehicle. What do we say if one of them sees it?" What is their concern? Their concern is that it is something they should not have, something that should not be seen.

The General is incredulous: "You didn't get a modified — you don't have one of those, do you?" — "I have one." — "Which? From where?" — "From the workshop. From the Al-Kindi Company." — "What?" — "From Al-Kindi." — "I'll come to see you in the morning. I'm worried you all have something left." — "We evacuated everything. We don't have anything left."

Note what he says: — "We evacuated everything." We didn't destroy it. We didn't line it up for inspection. We didn't turn it into the inspectors. We evacuated it to make sure it was not around when the inspectors showed up. "I will come to you tomorrow."

The Al-Kindi Company: This is a company that is well known to have been involved in prohibited weapons systems activity.

Let me play another tape for you. As you will recall, the inspectors found 12 empty chemical warheads on 16 January. On 20 January, four days later, Iraq promised the inspectors it would search for more. You will now hear an officer from Republican Guard headquarters issuing an instruction to an officer in the field. Their conversation took place just last week, on 30 January.

An audio tape, in Arabic, was played in the Council Chamber; an English translation provided by the United States delegation was projected on screen in the Chamber.

Headquarters officer: Sir ...

Officer in the field: Yes.

Headquarters officer: There is a directive of the [Republican] Guard chief of staff at the conference today ...

Officer in the field: Yes.

Headquarters officer: They are inspecting the ammunition you have.

Officer in the field: Yes.

Headquarters officer: ... for the possibility there are forbidden ammo.

Officer in the field: Yes?

Headquarters officer: For the possibility there is by chance forbidden ammo.

Officer in the field: Yes.

Headquarters officer: And we sent you a message to inspect the scrap areas and the abandoned areas.

Officer in the field: Yes.

Headquarters officer: After you have carried out what is contained in the message ... destroy the message.

Officer in the field: Yes.

Headquarters officer: Because I don't want anyone to see this message.

Officer in the field: OK. OK.

Headquarters officer: Thanks.

Officer in the field: Goodbye.

Mr. Powell (United States of America): Let me pause again and review the elements of that message: "They are inspecting the ammunition you have." — "Yes." — "For the possibility there are forbidden ammo. For the possibility there is by chance forbidden ammo?" — "Yes." — "We sent you a message yesterday to clear out all of the areas. The scrap areas. The abandoned areas. Make sure there is nothing there".

Remember the first message: "Evacuate it." This is all part of a system of hiding things, moving things out of the way and making sure they have left nothing behind.

You go a little further into this message and you see the specific instructions from headquarters: "After you have carried out what is contained in this message, destroy the message; because I don't want anyone to see this message." — "OK. OK." Why? Why? That message would have verified to the inspectors that they have been trying to turn over things. They were looking for things, but they do not want that message seen, because they were trying to clean up the area and leave no evidence behind of the presence of weapons of mass destruction; and they can claim that nothing was there, and the inspectors can look all they want and they will find nothing.

This effort to hide things from the inspectors is not one or two isolated events. Quite the contrary, this is part and parcel of a policy of evasion and deception that goes back 12 years — a policy set at the highest levels of the Iraqi regime.

We know that Saddam Hussain has what is called "a Higher Committee for Monitoring the Inspection Teams". Think about that — Iraq has a high-level committee to monitor the inspectors who were sent in to monitor Iraq's disarmament. Not to cooperate with them, not to assist them, but to spy on them and keep them from doing their jobs.

The committee reports directly to Saddam Hussain. It is headed by Iraq's Vice President, Taha Yasin Ramadan. Its members include Saddam Hussain's son, Qusay. This Committee also includes Lieutenant-General Amir Al-Sa'di, an advisor to Saddam. In case this name isn't immediately familiar to you, General Sa'di has been the Iraqi regime's

primary point of contact for Mr. Blix and Mr. ElBaradei. It was General Sa'di who last fall publicly pledged that Iraq was prepared to cooperate unconditionally with inspectors. Quite the contrary, Sa'di's job is not to cooperate. It is to deceive — not to disarm, but to undermine the inspectors; not to support them, but to frustrate them and to make sure they learn nothing.

We have learned a lot about the work of this special committee. We learned that, just prior to the return of inspectors last November, the regime had decided to resume what we heard called "the old game of cat-and-mouse".

For example, let me focus on the now famous declaration that Iraq submitted to this Council on 7 December. Iraq never had any intention of complying with the Council's mandate. Instead, Iraq planned to use the declaration to overwhelm us and to overwhelm the inspectors with useless information about Iraq's permitted weapons, so that we would not have time to pursue its prohibited weapons. Iraq's goal was to give us in this room, to give those of us on this Council, the false impression that the inspection process was working.

You saw the result. Mr. Blix pronounced the 12,200-page declaration rich in volume but poor in information and practically devoid of new evidence. Could any member of this Council honestly rise in defence of this false declaration?

Everything we have seen and heard indicates that, instead of cooperating actively with the inspectors to ensure the success of their mission, Saddam Hussain and his regime are busy doing all they possibly can to ensure that inspectors succeed in finding absolutely nothing.

My colleagues, every statement I make today is backed up by sources. Solid sources. These are not assertions. What we are giving you are facts and conclusions based on solid intelligence.

I will cite some examples, and these are from human sources. Orders were issued to Iraq's security organizations, as well as to Saddam Hussain's own office, to hide all correspondence with the Organization of Military Industrialization (OMI), the organization that oversees Iraq's weapons of mass destruction activities: make sure there are no documents left which would connect you to the OMI.

We know that Saddam's son Qusay ordered the removal of all prohibited weapons from Saddam's numerous palace complexes.

We know that Iraqi Government officials, members of the ruling Ba'ath party and scientists have hidden prohibited items in their homes. Other key files from military and scientific establishments have been placed in cars that are being driven around the countryside by Iraqi intelligence agents to avoid detection.

An image was projected on screen.

Thanks to intelligence provided to them, the inspectors recently found dramatic confirmation of these reports. When they searched the home of an Iraqi nuclear scientist, they uncovered roughly 2,000 pages of documents. You see them here being brought out of the home and placed in United Nations hands. Some of the material is classified and related to Iraq's nuclear programme.

Tell me, answer me: are the inspectors to search the house of every Government official, every Ba'ath party member and every scientist in the country to find the truth and to get the information they need to satisfy the demands of our Council?

Our sources tell us that in some cases, the hard drives of computers at Iraqi weapons facilities were replaced. Who took the hard drives? Where did they go? What is being hidden? Why? There is only one answer to the "why" — it is to deceive, to hide, to keep from the inspectors.

Numerous human sources tell us that the Iraqis are moving not just documents and hard drives but also weapons of mass destruction to keep them from being found by inspectors.

We know from sources that while we were here in this Council Chamber debating resolution 1441 (2002) last fall, a missile brigade outside Baghdad was dispersing rocket launchers and warheads containing biological warfare agent to various locations in western Iraq. Most of the launchers and warheads had been hidden in large groves of palm trees and were to be moved every one to four weeks to escape detection. We also have satellite photos that indicate that banned materials have recently been moved from a number of Iraqi facilities for weapons of mass destruction.

Let me say a word about satellite images before I show a couple. The photos I am about to show you are sometimes hard for the average person to interpret. Indeed, hard for me. The painstaking work of photo analysis takes experts with years and years of experience poring for hours and hours over light tables. But as I show you these images I will explain what they mean, what they indicate to our imagery specialists.

An image was projected on screen.

Let us look at this one. It is about a weapons munition facility — a facility that holds ammunition — at a place called Taji. This is one of about 65 such facilities in Iraq. We know that this one has housed chemical munitions. In fact, it is where the Iraqis recently came up with the additional four chemical weapons shells. Here you see 15 munitions bunkers in yellow and red outlines. The four that are in the red squares represent active chemical munitions bunkers.

How do I know this? How can I say this? Let me give you a closer look. Look at the image on the left.

Two images were projected on screen.

On the left is a close-up of one of the four chemical munitions bunkers. The two arrows indicate the presence of sure signs that these bunkers are storing chemical munitions. The arrow at the top that says "Security" points to a facility that is a signature item for this kind of bunker. Inside the facility are special guards and special equipment to monitor any leakage that might come out of the bunker. The truck you also see is a signature item. It is a decontamination vehicle, in case something goes wrong. This is characteristic of those four bunkers. The special security facility and the decontamination vehicle will be in the area; if not at any one or the other of them, it is moving around those four. It moves as needed, as people are working in the different bunkers.

Now look at the photo on the right. You are looking at two of those sanitized bunkers. The signature vehicles are gone, the tents are gone. It has been cleaned up. This was done on 22 December as the United Nations inspection team was arriving. You can see the inspection vehicles arriving in the lower portion of the picture on the right. The bunkers were clean when the inspectors got there. They found nothing.

This sequence of events raises the worrisome suspicion that Iraq had been tipped off to the forthcoming inspections at Taji. As it did throughout the 1990s, Iraq today is, we know, actively using its considerable intelligence capabilities to help hide its illicit activities. From our sources, we know that the inspectors are under constant surveillance by an army of Iraqi intelligence operatives. Iraq is relentlessly attempting to tap all their communications, both voice and electronic.

I call my colleagues' attention to the fine paper that the United Kingdom distributed yesterday, which describes in exquisite detail Iraqi deception activities.

In this next example, you will see the type of concealment activity Iraq has undertaken in response to the resumption of inspections. Indeed, in November 2002, just when the inspections were about to resume, this type of activity spiked. Here are three examples.

An image was projected on screen.

At this ballistic missile site on 10 November, we saw a cargo truck preparing to move ballistic missile components.

An image was projected on screen.

At this biological weapons-related facility, on 25 November, just two days before inspections resumed, this truck caravan appeared — something we almost never see at this facility, and we monitor it carefully and regularly.

An image was projected on screen.

At this ballistic missile facility — again, two days before inspections began — five large cargo trucks appeared, along with the truck-mounted crane to move missiles.

We saw this kind of housecleaning at close to 30 sites. Days after this activity, the vehicles and the equipment that I have just highlighted disappeared and the site returned to patterns of normalcy. We do not know precisely what Iraq was moving, but the inspectors already knew about these sites, so Iraq knew that they would be coming.

We must ask ourselves: Why would Iraq suddenly move equipment of this nature before inspections if it was anxious to demonstrate what it had or did not have? Remember the first intercept, in which two Iraqis talked about the need to hide a "modified vehicle" from the inspectors? Where did Iraq take all of this equipment? Why was it not presented to the inspectors?

Iraq also has refused to permit any U-2 reconnaissance flights that would give the inspectors a better sense of what is being moved before, during and after inspections. This refusal to allow this kind of reconnaissance is in direct, specific violation of operative paragraph 7 of our resolution 1441 (2002).

Saddam Hussain and his regime are not just trying to conceal weapons; they are also trying to hide people. You know the basic facts. Iraq has not complied with its obligation to allow immediate, unimpeded, unrestricted and private access to all officials and other persons, as required by resolution 1441 (2002).

The regime allows only interviews with inspectors in the presence of an Iraqi official — a "minder." The official Iraqi organization charged with facilitating inspections announced publicly, and announced ominously, that "nobody is ready" to leave Iraq to be interviewed.

Iraqi Vice-President Ramadan accused the inspectors of conducting espionage — a veiled threat that anyone cooperating with United Nations inspectors was committing treason.

Iraq did not meet its obligations under resolution 1441 (2002) to provide a comprehensive list of scientists associated with its weapons of mass destruction programmes. Iraq's list was out of date and contained only about 500 names, despite the fact that the United Nations Special Commission (UNSCOM) had earlier put together a list of about 3,500 names.

Let me just tell you what a number of human sources have told us.

Saddam Hussain has directly participated in the effort to prevent interviews. In early December, Saddam Hussain had all Iraqi scientists warned of the serious consequences that they and their families would face if they revealed any sensitive information to the inspectors. They were forced to sign documents acknowledging that divulging information is punishable by death.

Saddam Hussain also said that scientists should be told not to agree to leave Iraq. Anyone who agreed to be interviewed outside Iraq would be treated as a spy. This violates resolution 1441 (2002).

In mid-November, just before the inspectors returned, Iraqi experts were ordered to report to the headquarters of the special security organization to receive counter-intelligence training. The training focused on evasion methods, interrogation resistance techniques, and how to mislead inspectors.

These are not assertions. These are facts, corroborated by many sources — some of them sources of the intelligence services of other countries. For example, in mid-December, weapons experts at one facility were replaced by Iraqi intelligence agents, who were to deceive inspectors about the work that was being done there.

On orders from Saddam Hussain, Iraqi officials issued a false death certificate for one scientist, and he was sent into hiding.

In the middle of January, experts at one facility that was related to weapons of mass destruction were ordered to stay home from work to avoid the inspectors. Workers from other Iraqi military facilities not engaged in illicit weapons projects were to replace the workers who had been sent home.

A dozen experts have been placed under house arrest — not in their own houses, but as a group, at one of Saddam Hussain's "guest houses".

It goes on and on and on.

As the examples I have just presented show, the information and intelligence we have gathered point to an active and systematic effort on the part of the Iraqi regime to keep key materials and people from the inspectors, in direct violation of resolution 1441 (2002).

The pattern is not just one of reluctant cooperation. Nor is it merely a lack of cooperation. What we see is a deliberate campaign to prevent any meaningful inspection work.

Operative paragraph 4 of resolution 1441 (2002), which we lingered over so long last fall, clearly states that "false statements or omissions" in the declaration and a "failure by Iraq at any time to comply with, and cooperate fully in the implementation of, this resolution shall constitute" — and the facts speak for themselves — "a further material breach of Iraq's obligations". We wrote it this way to give Iraq an early test — would they give an honest declaration, and would they early on indicate a willingness to cooperate with the inspectors? It was designed to be an early test. They failed that test.

By this standard — the standard of this operative paragraph — I believe that Iraq is now in further material breach of its obligations. I believe that this conclusion is irrefutable and undeniable. Iraq has now placed itself in danger of the serious consequences called for in resolution 1441 (2002).

This body places itself in danger of irrelevance if it allows Iraq to continue to defy its will without responding effectively and immediately.

The issue before us is not how much time we are willing to give the inspectors to be frustrated by Iraqi obstruction, but how much longer are we willing to put up with Iraq's non-compliance before we, as the Council, we, as the United Nations, say: "Enough. Enough."

The gravity of this moment is matched by the gravity of the threat that Iraq's weapons of mass destruction pose to the world.

Let me now turn to those deadly weapons programmes and describe why they are real and present dangers to the region and to the world.

First, biological weapons. We have talked frequently here about biological weapons. By way of introduction and history, I think there are just three quick points I need to make.

First, you will recall that it took UNSCOM four long and frustrating years to pry — to pry — an admission out of Iraq that it had biological weapons.

Secondly, when Iraq finally admitted having these weapons in 1995, the quantities were vast. Less than a teaspoonful of dry anthrax in an envelope shut down the United States Senate in the fall of 2001. This forced several hundred people to undergo emergency medical treatment and killed two postal workers, just from that amount — just the quantity I am indicating — that was inside an envelope.

Iraq declared 8,500 litres of anthrax, but UNSCOM estimates that Saddam Hussain could have produced 25,000 litres. If concentrated into this dry form, that amount would be enough to fill tens upon tens upon tens of thousands of teaspoons — and Saddam Hussain has not verifiably accounted for even one teaspoonful of this deadly material.

That is my third point, and it is key. The Iraqis have never accounted for all of the biological agents they admitted they had and we know they had. They have never accounted for all the organic material used to make them. They have not accounted for many of the weapons filled with these agents, such as their R-400 bombs.

This is evidence, not conjecture. This is true. This is all well documented. Mr. Blix told the Council that Iraq has provided little evidence to verify anthrax production and no convincing evidence of its destruction. It should come as no shock, then, that since Saddam Hussain forced out the last inspectors in 1998, we have amassed much intelligence indicating that Iraq is continuing to make these weapons.

One of the most worrisome things that emerges from the thick intelligence file we have on Iraq's biological weapons is the existence of mobile production facilities used to make biological agents. Let me take you inside that intelligence file and share with you what we know from eyewitness accounts.

We have firsthand descriptions of biological weapons factories on wheels and on rails. The trucks and train cars are easily moved and are designed to evade detection by inspectors. In a matter of months, they can produce a quantity of biological poison equal to the entire amount that Iraq claimed to have produced in the years prior to the Gulf war.

Although Iraq's mobile production programme began in the mid-1990s, United Nations inspectors at the time had only vague hints of such programmes. Confirmation came later, in the year 2000. The source was an eyewitness: an Iraqi chemical engineer who supervised one of these facilities. He actually was present during biological agent production runs. He also was at the site when an accident occurred in 1998. Twelve technicians died from exposure to biological agents.

He reported that, when UNSCOM was in-country and inspecting, the biological weapons agent production always began on Thursdays at midnight because Iraq thought UNSCOM would not inspect on the Muslim holy day — Thursday night through Friday. He added that this was important because the units could not be broken down in the middle of a production run, which had to be completed by Friday evening, before the inspectors might arrive again. This defector is currently hiding in another country, with the certain knowledge that Saddam Hussain will kill him if he finds him.

His eyewitness account of these mobile production facilities has been corroborated by other sources. A second source, an Iraqi civil engineer in a position to know the details of the programme, confirmed the existence of transportable facilities moving on trailers. A third source, also in a position to know, reported in the summer of 2002 that Iraq had manufactured mobile production systems mounted on road-trailer units and on rail cars. Finally, a fourth source, an Iraqi major who defected, confirmed that Iraq has mobile biological research laboratories in addition to the production facilities I mentioned earlier.

An image was projected on screen.

We have diagrammed what our sources reported about these mobile facilities. Here you see both truck-mounted and railcar-mounted mobile factories. The descriptions our sources gave us of the technical features required by such facilities are highly detailed and extremely accurate.

An image was projected on screen.

As these drawings based on their descriptions show, we know what the fermentors look like. We know what the tanks, pumps, compressors and other parts look like. We know how they fit together. We know how they work. And we know a great deal about the platforms on which they are mounted. As shown in this diagram, these factories can be concealed easily, either by moving ordinary looking trucks and railcars along Iraq's thousands of miles of highway or track or by parking them in a garage or warehouse, or somewhere in Iraq's extensive system of underground tunnels and bunkers.

We know that Iraq has at least seven of these mobile biological agent factories. The truck-mounted ones have at least two or three trucks each. That means that the mobile production facilities are very few — perhaps 18 trucks that we know of. There may be more, but perhaps 18 that we know of. Just imagine trying to find 18 trucks among the thousands and thousands of trucks that travel the roads of Iraq every single day.

It took the inspectors four years to find out that Iraq was making biological agents. How long do you think it will take the inspectors to find even one of these 18 trucks, without Iraq coming forward as they are supposed to with the information about these kinds of capabilities?

These are sophisticated facilities. For example, they can produce anthrax and botulinum toxin. In fact, they can produce enough dry biological agent in a single month to kill thousands upon thousands of people. Dry agent of this type is the most lethal form for human beings.

By 1998, United Nations experts agreed that the Iraqis had perfected drying techniques for their biological weapons programmes. Now, Iraq has incorporated this drying expertise into these mobile production facilities.

We know from Iraq's past admissions that it has successfully weaponized not only anthrax but also other biological agents, including botulinum toxin, aflatoxin and ricin. But Iraq's research efforts did not stop there. Saddam Hussain has investigated dozens of biological agents causing diseases such as gas gangrene, plague, typhus, tetanus, cholera, camelpox and haemorrhagic fever. And he also has the wherewithal to develop smallpox.

The Iraqi regime has also developed ways to disperse lethal biological agents — widely, indiscriminately. Into the water supply. Into the air. For example, Iraq had a programme to modify aerial fuel tanks for Mirage jets. This video of an Iraqi test flight, obtained by UNSCOM some years ago, shows an Iraqi F-1 Mirage jet aircraft. Note the spray coming from beneath the Mirage. That is 2,000 litres of simulated anthrax that a jet is spraying.

A video was projected on screen.

In 1995, an Iraqi military officer, Mujahid Saleh Abdul Latif, told inspectors that Iraq intended the spray tanks to be mounted onto a MiG-21 that had been converted into an unmanned aerial vehicle (UAV). UAVs outfitted with spray tanks constitute an ideal method for launching a terrorist attack using biological weapons. Iraq admitted to producing four spray tanks, but to this day it has provided no credible evidence that they were destroyed — evidence that was required by the international community.

There can be no doubt that Saddam Hussain has biological weapons and the capability to rapidly produce more, many more. And he has the ability to dispense these lethal poisons and diseases in ways that can cause massive death and destruction.

If biological weapons seem too terrible to contemplate, chemical weapons are equally chilling.

UNMOVIC already laid out much of this, and it is documented for all of us to read in UNSCOM's 1999 report on the subject. Let me set the stage with three key points that all of us need to keep in mind.

First, Saddam Hussain has used these horrific weapons — on another country and on his own people. In fact, in the history of chemical warfare no country has had more battlefield experience with chemical weapons since the First World War than Saddam Hussain's Iraq.

Secondly, as with biological weapons, Saddam Hussain has never accounted for vast amounts of chemical weaponry: 550 artillery shells with mustard, 30,000 empty munitions and enough precursors to increase his stockpile to as much as 500 tons of chemical agents. If we consider just one category of missing weaponry — 6,500 bombs from the Iran-Iraq war — UNMOVIC says the amount of chemical agent in them would be on the order of 1,000 tons. These quantities of chemical weapons are now unaccounted for. Mr. Blix has quipped that "Mustard gas is not marmalade. You are supposed to know what you did with it." We believe Saddam Hussain knows what he did with it, and he has not come clean with the international community. We have evidence that these weapons existed. What we do not have is evidence from Iraq that they have been destroyed or where they are. That is what we are still waiting for.

The third point: Iraq's record on chemical weapons is replete with lies. It took years for Iraq finally to admit that it had produced four tons of the deadly nerve agent VX. A single drop of VX on the skin will kill in minutes. Four tons. The admission came out only after inspectors collected documentation as a result of the defection of Hussain Kamal, Saddam Hussain's late son-in-law. UNSCOM also gained forensic evidence that Iraq had produced VX and put it into weapons for delivery. Yet to this day, Iraq denies it had ever weaponized VX. And on 27 January, UNMOVIC told this Council that it has information that conflicts with the Iraqi account of its VX programme.

We know that Iraq has embedded key portions of its illicit chemical weapons infrastructure within its legitimate civilian industry. To all outward appearances — even to experts — the infrastructure looks like an ordinary civilian operation. Illicit and legitimate production can go on simultaneously. Or, on a dime, this dual-use infrastructure can turn from clandestine to commercial and then back again. These inspections would be unlikely — any inspections of such facilities would be unlikely — to turn up anything prohibited, especially if there is any warning that the inspections are coming. Call it ingenious or evil genius, but the Iraqis deliberately designed their chemical weapons programmes to be inspected. It is infrastructure with a built-in alibi.

Under the guise of dual-use infrastructure, Iraq has undertaken an effort to reconstitute facilities that were closely associated with its past programme to develop and produce chemical weapons. For example, Iraq has rebuilt key portions of the Tareq State establishment. Tareq includes facilities designed specifically for Iraq's chemical weapons programme and employs key figures from past programmes.

That is the production end of Saddam's chemical weapons business. What about the delivery end? I am going to show you a small part of a chemical complex called Al-Musayyib, a site that Iraq has used for at least three years to trans-ship chemical weapons from production facilities out to the field.

An image was projected on screen.

In May 2002, our satellites photographed the unusual activity in this picture. Here we see that cargo vehicles are again at this trans-shipment point, and we can see that they are accompanied by a decontamination vehicle associated with biological or chemical weapons activity. What makes this picture significant is that we have a human source who has corroborated that movement of chemical weapons occurred at this site at that time. So it is not just the photo, and it is not an individual seeing the photo: it is the photo and the knowledge of an individual being brought together to make the case.

An image was projected on screen.

This photograph of the site, taken two months later, in July, shows not only the previous site — which is the figure in the middle at the top with the bulldozer sign near it. It shows that the previous site and all of the other sites around that site have been fully bulldozed and graded. The topsoil has been removed. The Iraqis literally removed the crust of the Earth from large portions of this site in order to conceal chemical weapons evidence that would be there from years of chemical weapons activity.

To support its deadly biological and chemical weapons programmes, Iraq procures needed items from around the world, using an extensive clandestine network. What we know comes largely from intercepted communications and human sources who are in a position to know the facts. Iraq's procurement efforts include: equipment that can filter and separate micro-organisms and toxins involved in biological weapons; equipment that can be used to concentrate the agent; growth media that can be used to continue producing anthrax and botulinum toxin; sterilization equipment for laboratories; glass-lined reactors and specialty pumps that can handle corrosive chemical weapons agents and precursors; large amounts of thionyl chloride, a precursor for nerve and blister agents; and other chemicals such as sodium sulfide, an important mustard agent precursor.

Now, of course, Iraq will argue that these items can also be used for legitimate purposes. But if that is true, why do we have to learn about them by intercepting communications and risking the lives of human agents? With Iraq's well-documented history on biological and chemical weapons, why should any of us give Iraq the benefit of the doubt? I do not, and you will not either after you hear this next intercept.

Just a few weeks ago, we intercepted communications between two commanders in Iraq's Second Republican Guard Corps. One commander is going to be giving an instruction to the other. You will hear, as this unfolds, that what he wants to communicate to the other guy he wants to make sure that the other guy hears clearly, to the point of repeating it so that it gets written down and completely understood. Listen:

An audio tape, in Arabic, was played in the Council Chamber; an English translation provided by the United States delegation was projected on screen in the Chamber.

A: Hello —

B: Hello —

A: Hello —

B: May I help you, Sir?

A: Who is this?

B: Captain Ibrahim, Sir.

A: Captain Ibrahim, how are you?

B: God bless you, Sir.

A: How is your health?

B: May God preserve you.

A: How are you?

B: Good, praise God, Sir.

A: Captain Ibrahim.

B: Yes, Sir.

A: Write this down.

B: Yes, Sir.

[*pause*]

A: Hello?

B: Hello? Go ahead, Sir.

A: Hello, Ibrahim?

B: Yes, Sir.

A: Captain Ibrahim?

B: I am with you, Sir.

A: Remove —

B: Remove —

A: The expression —

B: The expression —

A: Nerve agents —

B: Nerve agents —

A: Whenever it comes up —

B: Whenever it comes up —

A: In the wireless instructions —

B: In the instructions —

A: Wireless —

B: Wireless —

A: Okay, buddy.

B: [Consider it] done, Sir.

Mr. Powell (United States of America): Let us review a few selected items of this conversation. Two officers talking to each other on the radio want to make that nothing is misunderstood: "Remove." — "Remove." — "The expression." — "The

expression — I got it." — "Nerve agents." — "Nerve agents." — "Wherever it comes up." — "Got it — wherever it comes up." — "In the wireless instructions." — "In the instructions." — "Correction — no — in the wireless instructions." — "Wireless — I got it."

Why does he repeat it that way? Why is he so forceful in making sure this is understood, and why did he focus on wireless instructions? Because the senior officer is concerned that somebody might be listening. Well, somebody was. "Nerve agents — stop talking about it. They are listening to us. Do not give any evidence that we have these horrible agents." But we know that they do, and this kind of conversation confirms it.

Our conservative estimate is that Iraq today has a stockpile of between 100 and 500 tons of chemical weapons agent. That is enough agent to fill 16,000 battlefield rockets. Even the low end, of 100 tons of agent, would enable Saddam Hussain to cause mass casualties across more than 100 square miles of territory — an area nearly five times the size of Manhattan.

Let me remind you of the 122-millimetre chemical warheads that the United Nations inspectors found recently. That discovery could very well be, as has been noted, the "tip of a submerged iceberg". The question before us all, my friends, is, when will we see the rest of the submerged iceberg?

Saddam Hussain has chemical weapons. Saddam Hussain has used such weapons. And Saddam Hussain has no compunction about using them again — against his neighbours and against his own people. And we have sources who tell us that he recently has authorized his field commanders to use them. He would not be passing out the orders if he did not have the weapons or the intent to use them.

We also have sources who tell us that, since the 1980s, Saddam's regime has been experimenting on human beings to perfect its biological or chemical weapons. A source said that 1,600 death-row prisoners were transferred in 1995 to a special unit for such experiments. An eyewitness saw prisoners tied down to beds, experiments conducted on them, blood oozing around the victims' mouths, and autopsies performed to confirm the effects on the prisoners. Saddam Hussain's inhumanity has no limits.

Let me turn now to nuclear weapons. We have no indication that Saddam Hussain has ever abandoned his nuclear weapons programme. On the contrary, we have more than a decade of proof that he remains determined to acquire nuclear weapons. To fully appreciate the challenge that we face today, remember that, in 1991, the inspectors searched Iraq's primary nuclear weapons facilities for the first time, and they found nothing to conclude that Iraq had a nuclear weapons programme. But, based on defector information, in May of 1991, Saddam Hussain's lie was exposed.

In truth, Saddam Hussain had a massive clandestine nuclear weapons programme that covered several different techniques to enrich uranium, including electro-magnetic isotope separation, gas centrifuge and gas diffusion. We estimate that this illicit programme cost the Iraqis several billion dollars. Nonetheless, Iraq continued to tell the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA) that it had no nuclear weapons programme. If Saddam had not been stopped, Iraq could have produced a nuclear bomb by 1993, years earlier than most worst-case assessments that had been made before the war. In 1995, as a result of another defector, we found out that, after his invasion of Kuwait, Saddam Hussain had initiated a crash programme to build a crude nuclear weapon in violation of Iraq's United Nations obligations.

Saddam Hussain already possesses two out of the three key components needed to build a nuclear bomb. He has a cadre of nuclear scientists with the expertise, and he has a bomb design. Since 1998, his efforts to reconstitute his nuclear programme have been focused on acquiring the third and last component: sufficient fissile material to produce a nuclear explosion. To make the fissile material, he needs to develop an ability to enrich uranium.

Saddam Hussain is determined to get his hands on a nuclear bomb. He is so determined that he has made repeated covert attempts to acquire high-specification aluminium tubes from 11 different countries — even after inspections resumed.

An image was projected on screen.

These tubes are controlled by the Nuclear Suppliers Group precisely because they can be used as centrifuges for enriching uranium.

By now, just about everyone has heard of these tubes and we all know that there are differences of opinion. There is controversy about what these tubes are for. Most United States experts think they are intended to serve as rotors in centrifuges used to enrich uranium. Other experts and the Iraqis themselves argue that they are really to produce the rocket bodies for a conventional weapon — a multiple rocket launcher. Let me tell you what is not controversial about these tubes. First, all the experts who have analysed the tubes in our possession agree that they can be adapted for centrifuge use. Secondly, Iraq had no business buying them for any purpose. They are banned for Iraq.

I am no expert on centrifuge tubes, but just as an old army trooper, I can tell you a couple of things. First, it strikes me as odd that these tubes are manufactured to a tolerance that far exceeds United States requirements for comparable rockets. Maybe the Iraqis just manufacture their conventional weapons to a higher standard than we do, but I do not think so. Secondly, we actually have examined tubes from several different batches that were seized clandestinely before they reached Baghdad. What we notice in these different batches is a progression to higher and higher levels of specification, including, in the latest batch, an anodized coating on extremely smooth inner and outer surfaces. Why would they continue refining the specifications, go to all that trouble, for something that, if it were a rocket, would soon be blown into shrapnel when it went off?

The high-tolerance aluminium tubes are only part of the story. We also have intelligence from multiple sources that Iraq is attempting to acquire magnets and high-speed balancing machines. Both items can be used in a gas centrifuge programme to enrich uranium. In 1999 and 2000, Iraqi officials negotiated with firms in Romania, India, Russia and Slovenia for the purchase of a magnet production plant. Iraq wanted the plant to produce magnets weighing 20 to 30 grams. That is the same weight as the magnets used in Iraq's gas centrifuge programme before the Gulf War. This incident, linked with the tubes, is another indicator of Iraq's attempt to reconstitute its nuclear weapons programme. Intercepted communications from mid-2000 through last summer show that Iraqi front companies sought to buy machines that can be used to balance gas centrifuge rotors. One of these companies also had been involved in a failed effort in 2001 to smuggle aluminium tubes into Iraq.

People will continue to debate this issue, but there is no doubt in my mind. These illicit procurement efforts show that Saddam Hussain is very much focused on putting in place the key missing piece from his nuclear weapons programme — the ability to produce fissile material. He also has been busy trying to maintain the other key parts of his nuclear programme, particularly his cadre of key scientists.

It is noteworthy that, over the last 18 months, Saddam Hussain has paid increasing personal attention to Iraq's top nuclear scientists, a group that the Government-controlled press openly calls his "nuclear mujahideen". He regularly exhorts them and praises their progress. Progress towards what end? Long ago, the Security Council — this Council — required Iraq to halt all nuclear activities of any kind.

Let me talk now about the systems Iraq is developing to deliver weapons of mass destruction, in particular Iraq's ballistic missiles and unmanned aerial vehicles (UAVs).

First, missiles. We all remember that, before the Gulf War, Saddam Hussain's goal was missiles that flew not just hundreds, but thousands of kilometres. He wanted to strike not only his neighbours, but also nations far beyond his borders. While inspectors destroyed most of the prohibited ballistic missiles, numerous intelligence reports over the past decade from sources inside Iraq indicate Saddam Hussain retains a covert force of up to a few dozen SCUD-variant ballistic missiles. These are missiles with a range of 650 to 900 kilometres. We know from intelligence and Iraq's own admissions that Iraq's alleged "permitted" ballistic missiles, the Al-Samoud 2 and the Al-Fatah, violate the 150-kilometre limit established by this Council in resolution 687 (1991). These are prohibited systems.

UNMOVIC also has reported that Iraq has illegally imported 380 SA-2 rocket engines. These are likely for use in the Al-Samoud 2. Their import was illegal on three counts: resolution 687 (1991) prohibited all military shipments into Iraq; UNSCOM specifically prohibited use of these engines in surface-to-surface missiles; and, finally, as we have just noted, they are for a system that exceeds the 150-kilometre range limit. Worst of all, some of these engines were acquired as late as December, after this Council adopted resolution 1441 (2002).

An image was projected on screen.

What I want you to know today is that Iraq has programmes that are intended to produce ballistic missiles that fly over 1,000 kilometres. One programme is pursuing a liquid-fuel missile that would be able to fly more than 1,200 kilometres and you can see from this map as well as I can who will be in danger of these missiles.

An image was projected on screen.

As part of this effort — another little piece of evidence — Iraq has built an engine test stand that is larger than anything it has ever had. Notice the dramatic difference in size between the test stand on the left — the old one — and the new one on the right. Note the large exhaust vent; this is where the flame from the engine comes out. The exhaust vent on the right test stand is five times longer than the one on the left. The one on the left was used for short-range missiles. The one on the right is clearly intended for long-range missiles that can fly 1,200 kilometres. This photograph was taken in April 2002. Since then, the test stand has been finished and a roof has been put over it so that it would be harder for satellites to see what is going on underneath the test stand.

Saddam Hussain's intentions have never changed. He is not developing these missiles for self-defence. These are missiles that Iraq wants in order to project power, to threaten and to deliver chemical, biological and, if we let him, nuclear warheads.

An image was projected on screen.

Now, unmanned aerial vehicles. Iraq has been working on a variety of UAVs for more than a decade. This is just illustrative of what a UAV would look like. This effort has included attempts to modify for unmanned flight the MIG-21 and, with greater success, an aircraft called the L-29. However, Iraq is now concentrating not on these aeroplanes, but on developing and testing smaller UAVs such as this.

UAVs are well suited for dispensing chemical and biological weapons. There is ample intelligence that Iraq has dedicated much effort to developing and testing spray devices that can be adapted for UAVs. And, in the little that Saddam Hussain told us about UAVs, he has not told the truth. One of these lies is graphically and indisputably demonstrated by intelligence we collected on 27 June last year.

An image was projected on screen.

According to Iraq's 7 December declaration, its UAVs have a range of only 80 kilometres, but we detected one of Iraq's newest UAVs in a test flight that went 500 kilometres non-stop on autopilot in the racetrack pattern depicted here. Not only is this test well in excess of the 150 kilometres that the United Nations permits; the test was also left out of Iraq's 7 December declaration. The UAV was flown around and around and around in this circle so that its 80-kilometre limit really was 500 kilometres unrefuelled and on autopilot, in violation of all of Iraq's obligations under resolution 1441 (2002).

The linkages over the past 10 years between Iraq's UAV programme and biological and chemical warfare agents are of deep concern to us. Iraq could use these small UAVs, which have a wingspan of only a few metres, to deliver biological agents to its neighbours or, if transported, to other countries, including the United States.

The information I have presented to you about these terrible weapons and about Iraq's continued flouting of its obligations under Security Council resolution 1441 (2002) links to a subject I now want to spend a little bit of time on. That has to do with terrorism. Our concern is not just about these illicit weapons of mass destruction. It is also about the way these illicit weapons can be connected to terrorists and terrorist organizations that have no compunction about using such devices against innocent people around the world.

Iraq and terrorism go back decades. Baghdad trains Palestine Liberation Front members in small arms and explosives. Saddam uses the Arab Liberation Front to funnel money to the families of Palestinian suicide bombers in order to prolong the intifada. And it is no secret that Saddam's intelligence service was involved in dozens of attacks and attempted assassinations in the 1990s.

But what I want to bring to your attention today is the potentially much more sinister nexus between Iraq and the Al Qaeda terrorist network, a nexus that combines classic terrorist organizations and modern methods of murder.

Iraq today harbours a deadly terrorist network headed by Abu Musab al-Zarqawi, an associate and collaborator of Osama bin Laden and his Al Qaeda lieutenants. Zarqawi, a Palestinian born in Jordan, fought in the Afghan war more than a decade ago.

Returning to Afghanistan in 2000, he oversaw a terrorist training camp. One of his specialties — and one of the specialties of that camp — is poisons. When our coalition ousted the Taliban, the Zarqawi network helped to establish another poison and explosive training-centre camp. That camp is located in north-eastern Iraq.

An image was projected on screen.

You are looking at a picture of that camp.

The network is teaching its operatives how to produce ricin and other poisons. Let me remind you how ricin works. Eating less than a pinch — imagine a pinch of salt — of ricin in your food would cause shock, followed by circulatory failure. Death comes within 72 hours, and there is no antidote; there is no cure. It is fatal.

Those helping to run that camp are Zarqawi lieutenants, operating in the northern Kurdish areas outside Saddam-Hussain-controlled Iraq. But Baghdad has an agent in the most senior levels of the radical organization, Ansar al-Islam, that controls this corner of Iraq. In 2000, this agent offered Al Qaeda safe haven in the region. After we swept Al Qaeda from Afghanistan, some of its members accepted that safe haven. They remain there today.

Zarqawi's activities are not confined to that small corner of north-east Iraq. He travelled to Baghdad in May 2002 for medical treatment, staying in the capital of Iraq for two months while he recuperated to fight another day. During his stay, nearly two dozen extremists converged on Baghdad and established a base of operations there. Those Al Qaeda affiliates based in Baghdad now coordinate the movement of people, money and supplies into and throughout Iraq for his network, and they have now been operating freely in the capital for more than eight months.

Iraqi officials deny accusations of ties with Al Qaeda. These denials are simply not credible. Last year an Al Qaeda associate bragged that the situation in Iraq was "good" — that Baghdad could be transited quickly. We know that these affiliates are connected to Zarqawi because they remain, even today, in regular contact with his direct subordinates, including the poison cell plotters. They are involved in moving more than money and materiel: last year, two suspected Al Qaeda operatives were arrested crossing from Iraq into Saudi Arabia. They were linked to associates of the Baghdad cell, and one of them received training in Afghanistan on how to use cyanide.

From his terrorist network in Iraq, Zarqawi can direct his network in the Middle East and beyond. We in the United States — all of us at the State Department and the Agency for International Development — lost a dear friend with the cold-blooded murder of Mr. Laurence Foley in Amman, Jordan, last October. A despicable act was committed that day: the assassination of an individual whose sole mission was to assist the people of Jordan. The captured assassin says his cell received money and weapons from Zarqawi for that murder. After the attack, an associate of the assassin left Jordan to go to Iraq to obtain weapons and explosives for further operations.

Iraqi officials protest that they are not aware of the whereabouts of Zarqawi or of any of his associates. Again, those protests are not credible. We know of Zarqawi's activities in Baghdad. I described them earlier; let me now add one other fact. We asked a friendly security service to approach Baghdad about extraditing Zarqawi and providing information about him and his close associates. This service contacted Iraqi officials twice, and we passed on details that should have made it easy to find Zarqawi. The network remains in Baghdad. Zarqawi still remains at large to come and go.

As my colleagues around this table and the citizens they represent in Europe know, Zarqawi's terrorism is not confined to the Middle East. Zarqawi and his network have plotted terrorist actions against countries including France, Britain, Spain, Italy, Germany and Russia. According to detainees, Abu Atiya, who graduated from Zarqawi's terrorist camp in Afghanistan, tasked at least nine North African extremists in 2001 to travel to Europe to conduct poison and explosive attacks. Since last year, members of this network have been apprehended in France, Britain, Spain and Italy. By our last count, 116 operatives connected to this global web have been arrested.

An image was projected on screen.

The chart you are looking at shows the network in Europe. We know about this European network and we know about its links to Zarqawi because the detainee who provided the information about the targets also provided the names of members of the network. Three of those he identified by name were arrested in France

last December. In the apartments of the terrorists, authorities found circuits for explosive devices and a list of ingredients to make toxins.

The detainee who helped piece this together says the plot also targeted Britain. Later evidence again proved him right. When the British unearthed a cell there, just last month, one British police officer was murdered during the disruption of the cell.

We also know that Zarqawi's colleagues have been active in the Pankisi Gorge, Georgia, and in Chechnya, Russia. The plotting to which they are linked is not mere chatter: members of Zarqawi's network say their goal was to kill Russians with toxins.

We are not surprised that Iraq is harbouring Zarqawi and his subordinates; this understanding builds on decades-long experience with respect to ties between Iraq and Al Qaeda. Going back to the early and mid-1990s, when Bin Laden was based in the Sudan, an Al Qaeda source tells us that Saddam and Bin Laden reached an understanding that Al Qaeda would no longer support activities against Baghdad.

Early Al Qaeda ties were forged by secret high-level Iraqi intelligence service contacts with Al Qaeda. We know that members of both organizations met repeatedly, and have met at least eight times at very senior levels since the early 1990s.

A foreign security service has told us that in 1996 Bin Laden met with a senior Iraqi intelligence official in Khartoum and that he later met the director of the Iraqi intelligence service.

Saddam became more interested as he saw Al Qaeda's appalling attacks. A detained Al Qaeda member tells us that Saddam was more willing to assist Al Qaeda after the 1998 bombings of our embassies in Kenya and Tanzania. Saddam was also impressed by the Al Qaeda attack on the USS *Cole* in Yemen in October 2000.

Iraqis continued to visit Bin Laden in his new home in Afghanistan. A senior defector — one of Saddam's former intelligence chiefs in Europe — says Saddam sent his agents to Afghanistan sometime in the mid-1990s to provide training to Al Qaeda members on document forgery. From the late 1990s until 2001, the Iraqi embassy in Pakistan played the role of liaison to the Al Qaeda organization.

Some claim these contacts do not amount to much. They say Saddam Hussain's secular tyranny and Al Qaeda's religious tyranny do not mix. I am not comforted by that thought. Ambition and hatred are enough to bring Iraq and Al Qaeda together — enough so that Al Qaeda could learn how to build more sophisticated bombs and learn how to forge documents, and enough so that Al Qaeda could turn to Iraq for help in acquiring expertise on weapons of mass destruction. The record of Saddam Hussain's cooperation with other Islamist terrorist organizations is clear. Hamas, for example, opened an office in Baghdad in 1999, and Iraq has hosted conferences attended by Palestine Islamic Jihad. Those groups are at the forefront of sponsoring suicide attacks against Israel.

Al Qaeda continues to have a deep interest in acquiring weapons of mass destruction. As with the story of Zarqawi and his network, I can trace the story of a senior terrorist operative, telling how Iraq provided training in those weapons to Al Qaeda. Fortunately, that operative is now detained, and he has told his story. I will relate it to you now as he himself described it.

That senior Al Qaeda terrorist was responsible for one of Al Qaeda's training camps in Afghanistan. His information comes first-hand, from his personal involvement at senior levels of Al Qaeda. He says Bin Laden and his top deputy in Afghanistan, deceased Al Qaeda leader Muhammad Atif, did not believe that Al Qaeda labs in Afghanistan were capable enough to manufacture these chemical or biological agents. They needed to go somewhere else. They had to look outside of Afghanistan for help. Where did they go? Where did they look? They went to Iraq.

The support that this detainee describes included Iraq offering chemical or biological weapons training for two Al Qaeda associates, beginning in December 2000. He says that a militant known as Abu Abdallah al-Iraqi had been sent to Iraq several times between 1997 and 2000 for help in acquiring poisons and gases. Abdullah al-Iraqi characterized the relationship he forged with Iraqi officials as "successful".

As I said at the outset, none of this should come as a surprise to any of us. Terrorism has been a tool used by Saddam for decades. Saddam was a supporter of terrorism long before these terrorist networks had a name, and this support continues. The nexus of poisons and terror is new; the nexus of Iraq and terror is old.

The combination is lethal. With this track record, Iraqi denials of supporting terrorism take their place alongside the other Iraqi denials of weapons of mass destruction. It is all a web of lies. When we confront a regime that harbours ambitions for regional domination, hides weapons of mass destruction and provides haven and active support for terrorists, we are not confronting the past, we are confronting the present. And unless we act, we are confronting an even more frightening future.

This has been a long and detailed presentation, and I thank you for your patience. But there is one more subject that I would like to touch on briefly. It should be a subject of deep and continuing concern to the Council: Saddam Hussain's violations of human rights.

Underlying all that I have said, underlying all the facts and the patterns of behaviour that I have identified, is Saddam Hussain's contempt for the will of the Council, his contempt for the truth and, most damning of all, his utter contempt for human life.

Saddam Hussain's use of mustard and nerve gases against the Kurds in 1988 was one of the twentieth century's most horrible atrocities. Five thousand men, women and children died. His campaign against the Kurds from 1987 to 1989 included mass summary executions, disappearances, arbitrary jailing, ethnic cleansing and the destruction of some 2,000 villages. He has also conducted ethnic cleaning against the Shi'ah Iraqis and the Marsh Arabs, whose culture has flourished for more than a millennium.

Saddam Hussain's police State ruthlessly eliminates anyone who dares to dissent. Iraq has more forced disappearance cases than any other country. Tens of thousands of people were reported missing in the past decade. Nothing points more clearly to Saddam Hussain's dangerous intentions and to the threat he poses to all of us than his calculated cruelty to his own citizens and to his neighbours. Clearly, Saddam Hussain and his regime will stop at nothing until something stops him.

For more than 20 years, by word and by deed, Saddam Hussain has pursued his ambition to dominate Iraq and the broader Middle East, using the only means he knows: intimidation, coercion and annihilation of all those who might stand in his way. For Saddam Hussain, possession of the world's most deadly weapons is the ultimate trump card, the one he must hold to fulfil his ambition.

We know that Saddam Hussain is determined to keep his weapons of mass destruction. He is determined to make more. Given Saddam Hussain's history of aggression, given what we know of his grandiose plans, given what we know of his terrorist associations and given his determination to exact revenge on those who oppose him, should we take the risk that he will not someday use these weapons at a time and a place and in a manner of his choosing — at a time when the world is in a much weaker position to respond?

The United States will not, and cannot, run that risk to the American people. Leaving Saddam Hussain in possession of weapons of mass destruction for a few more months or years is not an option — not in a post-11-September world.

Over three months ago, the Council recognized that Iraq continued to pose a threat to international peace and security and that Iraq had been, and remained in material breach of its disarmament obligations. Today Iraq still poses a threat, and Iraq still remains in material breach. Indeed, by its failure to seize its one last opportunity to come clean and disarm, Iraq has put itself in deeper material breach and closer to the day when it will face serious consequences for its continued defiance of the Council.

We have an obligation to our citizens — we have an obligation to this body — to see that our resolutions are complied with. We wrote resolution 1441 (2002) not in order to go to war. We wrote resolution 1441 (2002) to try to preserve the peace. We wrote resolution 1441 (2002) to give Iraq one last chance. Iraq is not so far taking that one last chance. We must not shrink from whatever is ahead of us. We must not fail in our duty and our responsibility to the citizens of the countries that are represented by this body.

The President: I now call on His Excellency Mr. Tang Jiaxuan, Minister for Foreign Affairs of China.

Mr. Tang Jiaxuan (China) (*spoke in Chinese*): I would like to begin by congratulating Germany on its assumption of the presidency of the Security Council for this month. It is a great pleasure to see Foreign Minister Fischer chair today's meeting.

I wish to take this opportunity to express my deep condolences with respect to the tragic deaths of the astronauts aboard the space shuttle *Columbia*, and to convey my heartfelt sympathy to the bereaved families.

I also wish to thank Secretary Powell for his presentation.

I would now like to share the following views on Iraq. First, the fact that the Foreign Ministers of most Council members are present at today's meeting shows the importance that all parties attach to the authority and role of the Security Council and their support for a resolution of the Iraqi issue within the framework of this world body. The Security Council has basically maintained unity and cooperation on this issue. That is of crucial importance to its appropriate resolution and represents the desire of the international community.

Secondly, China welcomes the United States move to provide the United Nations with its information and evidence on weapons of mass destruction in Iraq, which we believe is consistent with the spirit of resolution 1441 (2002) and could help increase transparency. We hope that various parties will hand over their information and evidence to the United Nations Monitoring, Verification and Inspection Commission (UNMOVIC) and to the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA). That will help make their inspections more effective. And, through their on-the-spot inspections, that information and evidence can also be evaluated. The two agencies should report their findings to the Security Council in a timely manner.

Thirdly, the inspections have been going on for more than two months now. The two agencies have been working very hard, and their work deserves our recognition. It is their view that they are not now in a position to draw conclusions, and they have suggested continuing with the inspections. We should respect the views of the two agencies and support the continuation of their work. We hope that the upcoming trip to Iraq by Chairman Blix and Director General ElBaradei on the 8th will yield positive results.

Not long ago, the two agencies pointed out some problems in the inspections. We urge Iraq to adopt a more proactive approach, to make further explanations and clarification as soon as possible and to cooperate with the inspection process.

Fourthly, the Security Council has a common stand on the elimination of weapons of mass destruction in Iraq. This is fully reflected in the relevant Council resolutions, particularly 1441 (2002), which was adopted unanimously. The most important aspect at present remains the full implementation of this resolution. As for the next step to be taken, the Council should decide this through discussions among all members, based on the results of the inspections.

Fifthly, it is the universal desire of the international community to see a political settlement to the issue of Iraq, within the United Nations framework, and to avoid war. This is something to which the Security Council must attach due importance. As long as there is still the slightest hope for a political settlement, we should exert our utmost efforts to achieving it. China is ready to join others in working in this direction.

The President: I thank the Minister for Foreign Affairs of China for his kind words addressed to me.

I now give the floor to The Right Honourable Jack Straw, Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs of the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland, Member of Parliament.

Mr. Straw (United Kingdom): May I, as the Foreign Minister of China has done, congratulate Germany on taking over the presidency of the Security Council and congratulate you personally on assuming the Chair this morning.

We have just heard a most powerful and authoritative case against the Iraqi regime set out by United States Secretary of State Powell. The international community owes him its thanks for laying bare the deceit practised by the regime of Saddam Hussain — and worse, the very great danger which that regime represents.

Three months ago we united to send Iraq an uncompromising message: cooperate fully with weapons inspectors, or face disarmament by force. After years of Iraqi deception, when resolutions were consistently flouted, resolution 1441 (2002) was a powerful reminder of the importance of international law and of the authority of the Security Council itself.

United and determined, we gave Iraq a final opportunity to rid itself of its weapons of mass terror, of gases which can poison thousands in one go; of bacilli and viruses like anthrax and smallpox, which can disable and kill by the tens of thousands; of the

means to make nuclear weapons, which can kill by the million.

By resolution 1441 (2002), we strengthened inspections massively. The only missing ingredient was full Iraqi compliance — immediate, full and active cooperation. But the truth is — and we all know this — without that full and active cooperation, however strong the inspectors' powers, however good the inspectors, inspections in a country as huge as Iraq could never be sure of finding all Iraqi weapons of mass destruction.

Sadly, the inspectors' reports last week, and Secretary Powell's presentation today, can leave us under no illusions about Saddam Hussain's response. Saddam Hussain holds United Nations Security Council resolution 1441 (2002) in the same contempt as all previous resolutions in respect of Iraq. Let us reflect on what that means: Saddam is defying every one of us, every nation here represented. He questions our resolve and is gambling that we will lose our nerve rather than enforce our will.

Paragraph 1 of resolution 1441 (2002) said that Saddam was and remained in "material breach" of Security Council resolutions. Paragraph 4 of that same resolution then set two clear tests for a further material breach by Iraq. The first test was that Iraq must not make "false statements" or "omissions" in its declaration. But the Iraqi document submitted to us on 7 December, as we have heard from Secretary Powell, was long on repetition but short on fact. It was not full, nor accurate, nor complete. By anyone's definition, it was a "false statement". Its central premise — that Iraq possesses no weapons of mass destruction — is a lie. This outright lie was repeated yesterday on television by Saddam Hussain.

The declaration also has obvious omissions, not least in a failure to explain what has happened to the large quantities of chemical and biological weapons materiel and munitions unaccounted for by United Nations weapons inspectors in 1998. And there is no admission of Iraq's extensive efforts to develop weapons of mass destruction since the last round of United Nations Special Commission (UNSCOM) inspections ended in December 1998.

Paragraph 4 goes on to set a second test for a further material breach — namely, a "failure by Iraq at any time to comply with, and cooperate fully in the implementation of" resolution 1441 (2002). Following the presentation by the inspectors last week, and today's briefing by Secretary Powell, it is clear that Iraq has failed this test. These briefings have confirmed our worst fears, that Iraq has no intention of relinquishing its weapons of mass destruction, no intention of following the path of peaceful disarmament set out in Security Council resolution 1441 (2002). Instead of open admissions and transparency, we have a charade, where a veneer of superficial cooperation masks wilful concealment, the extent of which has been devastatingly revealed this morning by Secretary Powell.

In his report last week, Mr. Blix set out a number of instances in which Iraqi behaviour reveals a determination to avoid compliance. Why is Iraq refusing to allow the United Nations Monitoring, Verification and Inspection Commission (UNMOVIC) to use a U-2 plane to conduct aerial imagery and surveillance operations? When will Iraq account for the 6,500 bombs that could carry up to 1,000 tonnes of chemical agent? How will Iraq justify having a prohibited chemical precursor for mustard gas? And how will Iraq explain the concealment of nuclear documents and the development of a missile programme in clear contravention of United Nations resolutions?

There is only one possible conclusion from all of this, which is that Iraq is in further material breach, as set out in United Nations Security Council resolution 1441 (2002). I believe that all colleagues here, all members, will share our deep sense of frustration that Iraq is choosing to spurn this final opportunity to achieve a peaceful outcome.

Given what has to follow, and the difficult choice now facing us, it would be easy to turn a blind eye to the wording of resolution 1441 (2002) and hope for a change of heart by Iraq. Easy, but wrong, because if we did so we would be repeating the mistakes of the past 12 years and empowering a dictator who believes that his diseases and poison gases are essential weapons to suppress his own people and to threaten his neighbours, and that by defiance of the United Nations he can indefinitely hoodwink the world.

Under the French presidency two weeks ago, we had a special meeting on the dangers of international terrorism — a meeting which I greatly welcomed — and the grave danger to the world of terrorists acquiring weapons of mass destruction through the

connivance of rogue States. Secretary Powell has today set out deeply worrying reports about the presence in Iraq of one of Osama bin Laden's lieutenants, Al-Zarqawi, and other members of Al Qaeda and their efforts to develop poisons.

It defies the imagination that all of this could be going on without the knowledge of Saddam Hussain. The recent discovery of the poison ricin in London has underlined again that this is a threat which all of us face.

Saddam must be left in no doubt as to the serious consequences and the serious situation which he now faces. The United Kingdom does not want war. What we want is for the United Nations system to be upheld. But the logic of resolution 1441 (2002) is inescapable. Time is now very short. The Council will have further reports from the inspectors on Friday week, 14 February. If non-cooperation continues, the Council must meet its responsibilities.

Our world faces many threats, from poverty and disease to civil war and terrorism. Working through this great institution, we have the capacity to tackle these challenges together. But if we are to do so, then the decisions we have to take must have a force beyond mere words.

This is a moment of choice for Saddam and for the Iraqi regime. But it is also a moment of choice for this institution, the United Nations. The pre-war predecessor of the United Nations — the League of Nations — had the same fine ideals as the United Nations. But the League failed because it could not create actions from its words. It could not back diplomacy with a credible threat and, where necessary, the use of force, so small evils went unchecked. Tyrants became emboldened, and then greater evils were unleashed.

At each stage, good men said, "Wait. The evil is not big enough to challenge". Then, before their eyes, the evil became too big to challenge. We slipped slowly down a slope, never noticing how far we had gone until it was too late.

We owe it to our history, as well as to our future, not to make the same mistake again.

The President: I thank the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs of the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland for the kind words he addressed to me.

I call now on the Minister for Foreign Affairs of the Russian Federation, His Excellency Mr. Igor Ivanov.

Mr. Ivanov (Russian Federation) (*spoke in Russian*): While I am in the United States, I should like first of all, on behalf of the leadership and the people of Russia, to express profound condolences to the Government and the people of the United States of America following the tragic death of the crew of the space shuttle *Columbia*. We share the grief of our American partners, with whom we are actively cooperating in outer space, primarily in the implementation of the international space station project.

The work of the astronauts is probably the best demonstration of the shared fundamental interests of humankind and of the need to pool our intellectual and creative efforts in the name of the progress of civilization.

Russia views today's meeting in the context of the consistent efforts of the Security Council to find a political settlement to the situation surrounding Iraq, on the basis of complete and scrupulous compliance with the relevant resolutions.

The unanimous adoption of Security Council resolution 1441 (2002) and the deployment of international inspectors in Iraq have demonstrated the ability of the international community to act together in the interests of attaining a common goal. We are convinced that maintaining the unity of the world community, primarily within the context of the Security Council, and our concerted action, in strict compliance with the Charter of the United Nations and the resolutions of the Security Council, are the most reliable means of resolving the problem of weapons of mass destruction in Iraq through political means.

There is no doubt that we all want to resolve this problem. It was with that in mind that we listened very closely to the presentation given by Secretary of State Powell. Russia continues to believe that the Security Council — and, through it, the entire international community — must have all of the information it needs in order to determine whether or not there are remaining weapons of mass destruction in Iraq.

The information given to us today definitely will require very serious and thorough study. Experts in our countries must immediately begin to analyse it and

then draw the appropriate conclusions. The main point is that this information must immediately be handed over for processing by the United Nations Monitoring, Verification and Inspection Commission (UNMOVIC) and the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA), including through direct on-site verification during the inspections in Iraq.

Baghdad must give the inspectors answers to the questions that we heard in the presentation given by the United States Secretary of State. We appeal once again to all States immediately to hand over to the international inspectors any information that can help them discharge their responsible mandate.

The information provided today by the United States Secretary of State once again convincingly indicates that the activities of the international inspectors in Iraq must be continued. They alone can say to what extent Iraq is complying with the demands of the Security Council. They alone can help the Security Council work out and adopt carefully balanced decisions — the best possible decisions.

The statements made by Mr. Blix and by Mr. ElBaradei in this very Chamber on 27 January show that a unique inspection mechanism has been deployed in Iraq which has everything it needs to ensure compliance with resolution 1441 (2002) and other Security Council resolutions. This great potential must be used to the fullest.

The Security Council and all its members must do everything they can to support the inspection process. Russia, for its part, intends to continue actively to promote the creation of the best possible conditions for the work of the international inspectors in Iraq. In particular, we are prepared to provide an aircraft for aerial monitoring and, if need be, additional inspectors as well.

Russia welcomes the continuation of dialogue between the Executive Chairman of UNMOVIC and the Director General of the IAEA with Iraq on outstanding unresolved issues. We hope that this dialogue will be extremely concrete and productive. It is facilitated, inter alia, by the fact that work has been carried out according to the timetable set out in resolution 1284 (1999), which should make the international inspections and monitoring even more systematic and effective, especially with respect to clarifying key disarmament tasks by the end of March of this year.

It is perfectly obvious that the work of UNMOVIC and the IAEA can be effective only with full cooperation in good faith from Iraq. Iraq should be the first to be concerned about providing definitive clarity on the question of weapons of mass destruction and their delivery systems. That is the only way to reach a political settlement, including the lifting of the sanctions on Iraq. Baghdad should fully realize how crucial this is and do everything in its power so that the international inspectors can carry out their mandate.

Recently, we have often heard the expression that time is running out for a settlement to the question of Iraq. Of course, resolution 1441 (2002) aims to quickly achieve practical results, but it does not set out any concrete time frame. The inspectors alone can advise the Security Council on how much time they need to carry out the tasks entrusted to them. In this respect, we cannot rule out the possibility that at some stage the Security Council may need to adopt a new resolution, or perhaps more than one resolution. The main point is that our efforts should continue to be aimed at doing everything possible to facilitate the inspection process, which has proven its effectiveness and which makes it possible to implement Council decisions by peaceful means.

Unfortunately, the current situation concerning Iraq is far from being the last problem whose solution we will all still have to work on. The international community of the twenty-first century is confronting new global threats and challenges requiring a unified response from all States. A graphic example of that approach was the creation of the broad coalition to combat the primary and most dangerous threat of our time: international terrorism. It is precisely because of the unity of the world community that initial success has been achieved in combating that scourge. However, it is perfectly obvious that we are only beginning a very difficult battle with terrorism. And the information from the United States Secretary of State about the activities of Al Qaeda is further corroboration of that fact.

The unity of the world community will continue to be the principal guarantee of the effectiveness of the world's action. It is precisely unity that is essential in our approach to all problems, however complicated they may be. Tactical differences may arise, it is true. And probably there will be quite a few of them, given the complexity of the tasks we need to resolve. But

they must not overshadow the strategic goals that are in the interests of our common security and stability.

The President: I now call on His Excellency Mr. François-Xavier Ngoubeyou, Minister of State in charge of External Relations of Cameroon.

Mr. Ngoubeyou (Cameroon) (*spoke in French*): At the outset, on behalf of Cameroon and its head of State, His Excellency Mr. Paul Biya, I wish to reiterate to the American people and Government our sincere condolences following the tragic death of seven astronauts on 1 February 2003 in the mid-flight explosion of the space shuttle *Columbia*. We particularly extend our sympathy to their bereaved and distressed families here in the United States, in Israel and in India. The conquest of space is one of the most important peaceful adventures in the history of all humankind. Therefore, the terrible catastrophe of Saturday affects us all very much.

With respect to the question before the Council today, I would first like to offer you, Sir, the sincere congratulations of Cameroon upon your assumption of the presidency of the Security Council for the month of February. You may rest assured of my delegation's complete cooperation and support. I would also like to express my appreciation to France for its particularly dynamic and productive presidency.

My country wishes to express its appreciation to the President of the United States, who, in his concern to act and consult with the United Nations, in his statement of 28 January 2003 requested the convening of this meeting of the Security Council. He decided to entrust Secretary of State Colin Powell, to whom we have just listened attentively, with presenting to the Security Council — and hence to the United Nations and the international community — "information and intelligence about Iraq's illegal weapons programme".

The information is certainly troubling, at the least. We take note of it. It is now up to us to make the best use of that information, in the spirit of the process set out in Council resolution 1441 (2002) of 8 November 2002. The elements of information that have just been presented are useful, for they can facilitate, in particular, the inspection work now under way. In these conditions, would it not be appropriate to give the inspectors time to make use of this information?

The Security Council is meeting once again on the issue of Iraq. To date, the Iraqi crisis is the situation of highest profile in the annals of the Security Council, so attentive are international public opinion and the peoples of the entire world to the development and evolution of this situation.

This is undoubtedly the first time since the Cuban missile crisis that the peoples of the entire world are assessing the two possible options in a crisis of this seriousness: a diplomatic and therefore peaceful settlement, or a war bringing in its wake the grave consequences that such an action holds for Iraq, the Middle East and the world.

I am well aware that our Council does not deliberate or adopt resolutions under pressure from public opinion, even global opinion. But how can we ignore today the fact that the disarmament of Iraq is a divisive question revealing that there are two schools. There are those — who are many — who advocate a peaceful settlement and a rejection of the use of arms. And there are those who advocate a military solution and who could be reinforced by the conduct of the Iraqi authorities, who, despite the seriousness of the situation, are so little inclined towards active, complete, sincere and unambiguous cooperation with the inspection missions.

Both groups certainly assess the role and the mission that belongs to the Security Council. The Council is today considered to be a decisive player from whom the world expects a solution. Therefore, Cameroon, like other members of the Security Council and Member States of the United Nations, can only recommend the continuation and implementation of forceful, robust and decisive action to compel the Iraqi authorities to conform to the spirit and the letter of resolution 1441 (2002) — to cooperate fully with the inspection teams.

Cameroon welcomes the attention, the interest and the commitment of the United States with regard to the eradication of all weapons of mass destruction in Iraq. The preservation of international peace and security, which underlies its determination, is an eminently noble and generous objective. And because we understand the matter thus, we are convinced that the United States — for the defence of its own interests and of those of the international community — will base its action in the spirit of the San Francisco Conference, which founded the United Nations. We are convinced that it, imbued with that spirit, will assume all of its responsibilities under the current

circumstances, within the framework of, and in accordance with, the provisions of the Charter and of Security Council resolutions.

Let us not forget: what we are dealing with is the maintenance of international peace and security. In that area, the central role entrusted to the Security Council by the Charter must be reaffirmed, preserved and respected. Indeed, it is up to the Council, in cohesion and in unity, to decide one way or the other.

As I said at the beginning of my statement, Cameroon understands and shares the concerns and the apprehensions of the United States, as well as its determination to disarm Iraq of weapons of mass destruction. Today, my country wishes above all to reaffirm that, for the United States as well as for the rest of the international community, war is not inevitable. Let us give the inspectors the time to utilize, to study and to verify the elements of information that have been presented to us. Cameroon believes that the United Nations Monitoring, Verification and Inspection Commission (UNMOVIC) and the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA) must, as they have requested, continue their delicate mission with greater commitment and in a more robust way, using the most productive technological means.

Within the framework of that mission, Iraq and its authorities must comply, without restriction or delay, with all the obligations imposed on it in the Security Council. We call upon and urge the Iraqi authorities to consider the current context in a responsible way, to realistically interpret what is being said, prepared and done with regard to Iraq. Once again, we call upon Iraq to cooperate fully and actively with UNMOVIC and with the IAEA. That is in Iraq's interest, and it is in the Iraqi people's interest.

Because Iraq has violated many Council resolutions in the past, today it is up to Iraq to show compliance with them; it is up to Iraq to provide proof of its firm will to cooperate, to declare the state of its military-industrial infrastructure. It is up to the inspectors to verify the truth of that declaration. May those who yesterday were able to convince Iraq resume that endeavour today, because tomorrow it may be too late.

The disarmament of Iraq must not appear to be a confrontation between that country and the United States. Iraq's disarmament is of interest and of concern to the entire international community. It is therefore a matter between the Security Council — hence the United Nations — and Iraq. International law, multilateral diplomacy and collective action in the United Nations must be made to prevail within and in the framework of the United Nations. Moreover, the authorities appointed by the Security Council to gather information that will enable it to decide must be able to work calmly, free of media pressure and of heated discourse that feeds confusion and suspicion.

Finally, we appeal to every Member of the United Nations that might have information, documents or testimony about the possible presence of weapons of mass destruction in Iraq to follow the example of the United States and to provide such information to the Security Council, which will be obliged to examine it and to take it into account in its future deliberations on the implementation of resolution 1441 (2002).

At this critical time, when our time is becoming shorter, Cameroon welcomes the departure for Baghdad of Mr. Hans Blix and Mr. Mohammed ElBaradei on 8 February. But we wonder — under the grave circumstances that prevail, in which peace hangs in the balance — whether the time has not come for the Council to ask the Secretary-General, Mr. Kofi Annan, Nobel Peace Prize laureate, to go to Iraq to speak with President Saddam Hussain on urgent ways and means to speed a peaceful resolution of this burning and crucial situation. The present situation, fraught with dangers for peace, calls on all of us. We must not await the inevitable before acting. Let us anticipate; let us act, today, here and now.

The President: I now call on the Minister for Foreign Affairs of France, His Excellency Mr. Dominique Galouzeau de Villepin.

Mr. Galouzeau de Villepin (France) (*spoke in French*): At the outset, France wishes to reiterate our condolences to our American friends with regard to the terrible tragedy that occurred with the space shuttle *Columbia*.

I congratulate the German presidency of the Security Council on having organized this meeting, and I thank Colin Powell, Secretary of State of the United States, for having taken the initiative of convening it. I listened with much attention to the elements that he shared with us. They contained information, indications and questions that deserve further exploration. It will be up to the inspectors to assess the facts, as envisaged in resolution 1441 (2002). Already,

his presentation has provided new justification for the approach chosen by the United Nations; it must strengthen our common determination.

By unanimously adopting resolution 1441 (2002), we chose to act through the path of inspections. That policy rests on three fundamental points: a clear objective on which we cannot compromise — the disarmament of Iraq; a method — a rigorous system of inspections that requires Iraq's active cooperation and that affirms the Security Council's central role at each stage; and finally, a requirement — that of our unity. It gave full force to the message that we unanimously addressed to Baghdad. I hope that today's meeting will enable us to strengthen that unity.

Important results have already been achieved. The United Nations Monitoring, Verification and Inspection Commission (UNMOVIC) and the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA) are working. The deployment on the ground of more than one hundred inspectors, with 300 visits a month on average, an increase in the number of sites inspected and full access to the presidential sites, in particular, are all major achievements. In the nuclear domain, these first two months have enabled the IAEA to make — as Mr. ElBaradei emphasized — good progress in its knowledge of Iraq's capacity, and that is a key element.

In the areas covered by UNMOVIC, the inspections have provided us with useful information. For example, Mr. Blix has indicated that no trace of biological or chemical agents has thus far been detected by the inspectors, either in the analyses of samples taken on the inspected sites or in the 12 empty warheads discovered on 16 January at Ukhaider.

There are still grey areas in Iraq's cooperation. The inspectors have reported real difficulties. In his 27 January report, Mr. Blix gave several examples of unresolved questions in the ballistic, chemical and biological domains. These uncertainties are not acceptable. France will continue to pass on all the information it has so they can be better defined.

Right now, our attention has to be focused as a priority on the biological and chemical domains. It is there that our presumptions about Iraq are the most significant. Regarding the chemical domain, we have evidence of its capacity to produce VX and yperite. In the biological domain, the evidence suggests the possible possession of significant stocks of anthrax and botulism toxin, and possibly a production capability. Today the absence of long-range delivery systems reduces the potential threat of these weapons, but we have disturbing signs of Iraq's continued determination to acquire ballistic missiles beyond the authorized 150-kilometre range. In the nuclear domain, we must clarify in particular any attempt by Iraq to acquire aluminium tubes.

So it is a demanding démarche, anchored in resolution 1441 (2002), that we must take together. If this path were to fail and lead us into a dead end, then we rule out no option, including in the final analysis the recourse to force, as we have said all along.

In such a hypothesis, however, several answers will have to be clearly provided to all Governments and all peoples of the world to limit the risks and uncertainties. To what extent do the nature and scope of the threat justify the recourse to force? How do we make sure that the considerable risks of such intervention are actually kept under control? This obviously requires a collective démarche of responsibility on the part of the world community. In any case, it must be clear that, in the context of such an option, the United Nations will have to be at the centre of the action to guarantee Iraq's unity, ensure the region's stability, protect civilians and preserve the unity of the world community.

For now, the inspections regime favoured by resolution 1441 (2002) must be strengthened, since it has not been explored to the end. Use of force can only be a final recourse. Why go to war if there still exists an unused space in resolution 1441 (2002)? Consistent with the logic of that resolution, we must therefore move on to a new stage and further strengthen the inspections. With the choice between military intervention and an inspections regime that is inadequate for lack of cooperation on Iraq's part, we must choose to strengthen decisively the means of inspection. That is what France is proposing today.

To do this, we must define with Mr. Blix and Mr. ElBaradei the requisite tools for increasing their operational capabilities. Let us double or triple the number of inspectors and open up more regional offices. Let us go further: Why not establish a specialized body to keep under surveillance the sites and areas already inspected? Let us substantially increase the capabilities for monitoring and collecting information on Iraqi territory. France is ready to

provide full support; it is ready to deploy Mirage IV observer aircraft. Let us collectively establish a coordination and information-processing centre that would supply Mr. Blix and Mr. ElBaradei, in real time and in a coordinated way, with all the intelligence resources they might need. Let us list the unresolved disarmament questions and rank them by importance. With the consent of the leaders of the inspection teams, let us define a demanding and realistic time frame for moving forward in the assessment and elimination of problems. There must be regular follow-up to the progress made in Iraq's disarmament.

This enhanced regime of inspections and monitoring could be usefully complemented by having a permanent United Nations coordinator for disarmament in Iraq, stationed in Iraq and working under the authority of Mr. Blix and Mr. ElBaradei.

Iraq must cooperate actively, however. The country must comply immediately with the demands of Mr. Blix and Mr. ElBaradei, in particular by permitting meetings with Iraqi scientists without witnesses; agreeing to the use of U2 observer flights; adopting legislation to prohibit the manufacture of weapons of mass destruction; and immediately handing over to the inspectors all relevant documents on unresolved disarmament questions, in particular in the biological and chemical domains. Those handed over on 20 January constitute a step in the right direction. The 3,000 pages of documents discovered at the home of a researcher show that Baghdad must do more. Absent documents, Iraq must be able to present credible testimony. The Iraqi authorities must also provide the inspectors with answers to the new elements presented by Colin Powell.

Between now and the inspectors' next report, on 14 February, Iraq will have to provide new elements. The upcoming visit to Baghdad by the leaders of the inspectors will have to be the occasion for clear results to that end.

This is the demanding démarche that we must take together towards a new stage. Its success presupposes, today as yesterday, that the international community will remain united and mobilized. It is our moral and political duty first to devote all our energy to Iraq's disarmament in peace and in compliance with the rule of law and justice. France is convinced that we can succeed on this demanding path so long as we maintain our unity and cohesion. This is option of collective responsibility.

The President: I now call on His Excellency Mr. Luis Ernesto Derbez, Minister for Foreign Affairs of Mexico.

Mr. Derbez (Mexico) (*spoke in Spanish*): The delegation of Mexico has taken due note of the useful information presented to the Council by the Government of the United States. This presentation clearly contains valuable information to help determine and guide the Council's decisions. It will also give us additional elements of judgement in determining the extent to which Iraq has complied with the resolutions adopted by this organ.

The presentation by Secretary of State Powell reinforces Mexico's firm belief in the need for progress towards the effective and verifiable elimination of weapons of mass destruction in Iraq, as well as the facilities for developing them. Mexico's position in the Security Council has been unequivocally aimed at achieving the disarmament of Iraq in the most effective way possible and by peaceful means, while ensuring at all times that this goal is achieved at the lowest cost in terms of human suffering and economic instability and without undermining the urgent battle against international terrorism.

Consistent with that position, the Government of Mexico has made direct approaches to the Iraqi authorities, urging them to cooperate without delay in the manner required by the inspectors. We have shared the content of these initiatives with other members of the Security Council so that this message might be conveyed to the Iraqi authorities as forcefully as possible and through the greatest possible number of channels. Once again, with the presence of the representatives of Iraq at this table, we repeat our call for their authorities concretely, immediately and urgently to translate their declared intentions into active cooperation and genuine collaboration with the inspection process, as provided for in resolution 1441 (2002).

Mexico reaffirms its confidence in the inspection activities now under way as the best possible way to detect, destroy and verify the elimination of weapons of mass destruction in Iraq. We are in favour of intensifying and strengthening those inspections, as well as the assistance which members of the Council and the international community in general may

provide to the United Nations Monitoring, Verification and Inspection Commission and to the International Atomic Energy Agency to successfully accomplish their delicate mission.

It is in that context that Mexico recognizes the importance of Secretary of State Powell's presentation to the Security Council. It warmly welcomes the contribution of elements that support the work of the inspectors, enhance the accuracy and effectiveness of their mission and help to expedite and increase the reliability of the disarmament process.

Mexico's emphasis on a multilateral approach is, indeed, consistent with the views and convictions of the Mexican people. But it is also in keeping with a pragmatic concern to build the international consensus required by a task of such global implications as the elimination of weapons of mass destruction.

That is why Mexico reiterates its readiness to continue to make a constructive contribution to the work of the Security Council, in the conviction that cooperation and the search for multilateral solutions will give greater weight to the decisions of this body. Perhaps even more important, we reiterate our demand to the Iraqi Government that it work urgently and on an ongoing basis to grant access to all of its facilities so that the inspections can be successfully concluded. That will make it possible at the end of this process not only to have a strengthened and revitalized United Nations system, but also to provide the international community with guarantees that the mission of disarmament has been fully accomplished.

The President: I now call on His Excellency Mr. Solomon Passy, Minister for Foreign Affairs of Bulgaria.

Mr. Passy (Bulgaria): I should like first to congratulate Germany on its assumption of the presidency of the Security Council for this month, and to thank France for its extraordinarily efficient presidency in January.

Allow me also to express the deepest condolences of the Bulgarian people with regard to the *Columbia* space shuttle tragedy — to the families and the peoples of the seven astronauts.

I should like to join previous speakers in expressing my appreciation for the information that Secretary of State Colin Powell has laid out before us. Yesterday, Bulgaria also aligned itself with the position of the European presidency, on behalf of the European Union, regarding Iraq.

The very fact that the United States Government has chosen to present this information to the Security Council strengthens the centrality of the Council, and we fully endorse that approach. The strong and compelling evidence presented by Secretary Powell sheds additional light on the realities in Iraq as far as the implementation of resolution 1441 (2002) and other relevant Council resolutions is concerned. I hope that the data that has been made public can still be used for the effective accomplishment of the work of the inspectors of the United Nations Monitoring, Verification and Inspection Commission (UNMOVIC) and the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA). I would like to believe that what we heard today from the United States Secretary of State will have the same mobilizing effect on the international community as the adoption of resolution 1441 (2002).

Three months ago, the Security Council unanimously adopted resolution 1441 (2002) as a last chance for the disarmament of Iraq by peaceful means. I am confident that today's meeting of the Council — the body which bears the primary responsibility for maintaining international peace and security — will carry a compelling message to the international community.

Today's ministerial discussion in the Security Council comes in the wake of the reports of the UNMOVIC and IAEA inspectors submitted on 27 January and of the discussion that followed on 29 January. The active cooperation of the Iraqi authorities is a prerequisite for the full implementation of resolution 1441 (2002). Unfortunately, Iraq's cooperation has not been satisfactory on the substantive issues identified by the inspectors. We insist that Iraq provide additional and complete information confirming the destruction of any weapons of mass destruction available to it and duly address the specific questions already raised by the international community about the Iraqi weapons programme.

It is of paramount importance that Iraq give, unconditionally and immediately, clear evidence that it has fully changed its attitude to one of proactive cooperation with the inspectors. That is the only way in which the disarmament of Iraq can be brought to a successful end in a peaceful manner. So far, Iraq has been in material breach of the relevant Security

Council resolutions, including resolution 1441 (2002), and the Secretary of State has just provided new evidence proving that.

By the time of the next briefing, scheduled for 14 February, we expect Iraq to have complied fully with its disarmament obligations, and we look forward to another objective, impartial and professional report from the inspectors.

Bulgaria's position has always been that all means should be used for the peaceful settlement of the present crisis. My country believes that the effective and peaceful disarmament of Iraq is still possible through the implementation of resolution 1441 (2002). At the same time, the international community should assume its responsibilities for ensuring the implementation of the relevant Security Council resolutions, thus strengthening the role and the authority of the United Nations in international relations. In the event that, in the near future, the inspectors do not report to the Council that Iraq has changed its attitude with regard to its obligations, the Security Council will have to take the appropriate action for the implementation of the relevant resolutions adopted since 1990.

Hopefully, today's meeting will represent a further step towards the unity of the Council on the issue of Iraq, reinforcing the efforts of the international community to fight the proliferation of weapons of mass destruction.

We hope that the Council will face its great responsibilities with unanimity and will reaffirm its primary role in dealing with the crisis. The Iraqi people deserve a better destiny and a peaceful future, and Bulgaria is ready to contribute towards achieving that goal.

The President: I now call on His Excellency Mr. Khurshid Kasuri, Minister for Foreign Affairs of Pakistan.

Mr. Kasuri (Pakistan): I should like to begin by conveying condolences, on behalf of the Government of Pakistan and on my own account, to the Government and the people of the United States on the tragic loss of the space shuttle *Columbia* and of the lives of the seven astronauts.

Germany is presiding over the Security Council at a critical moment for international peace and security. Your stewardship of the Council at this historic meeting, Mr. Foreign Minister, will not only elevate our proceedings but also ensure that they will be productive in moving us towards peace.

Allow me to join my colleagues in thanking Secretary of State Colin Powell for his important presentation to the Security Council. We welcome the continuation of the United States initiative to work through the United Nations in seeking the elimination of weapons of mass destruction in Iraq. Paragraph 10 of resolution 1441 (2002) requests all Member States to give full support to the United Nations Monitoring, Verification and Inspection Commission (UNMOVIC) and the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA) in the discharge of their mandates. We believe that the information provided today by the United States is in response to the provisions of resolution 1441 (2002). Other States possessing such information should also share it fully with the Council.

The extensive and effective presentation made by Secretary Powell has provided the Council with considerable additional information. It will add to the knowledge base of Council members and, even more important, to the effectiveness of UNMOVIC and the IAEA in carrying out their mandate. This information will enhance the ability of the inspectors to address areas of concern and to pursue more specific lines of action in the inspection process. We therefore believe that this is a significant step forward in responding to the challenge that the Council faces in securing the full implementation of its resolutions regarding the elimination of Iraq's weapons of mass destruction. We hope that the concerns raised by Secretary Powell will receive credible answers from Iraq in the inspections process.

The Security Council has already held detailed discussions on the reports of Mr. Blix and Mr. ElBaradei, presented to the Council on 27 January. We agree with Mr. Blix that Security Council resolutions 687 (1991), 1284 (1999) and 1441 (2002) impose a clear obligation on Iraq to declare its weapons of mass destruction and to allow unhindered verification that those weapons have been destroyed and eliminated.

Following the last briefing to the Security Council by Mr. ElBaradei and Mr. Blix, the head of UNMOVIC, the majority of the Security Council was of the view that full verification of the Iraqi declaration would require more active cooperation from Iraq. We

share that view. In that regard, Mr. Blix has asked the Iraqi Government to take three steps in the context of his forthcoming visit to Baghdad: first, to allow free and unrestricted aerial surveillance, including by manned and unmanned reconnaissance vehicles; secondly, to agree to private interviews of Iraqi scientists, without the presence of minders; and, thirdly, to adopt legislation prohibiting the acquisition and local production of weapons of mass destruction. Iraq should move swiftly towards meeting these requirements, and should respond to the specific concerns on substantive issues raised by Mr. Blix and Mr. ElBaradei.

Resolution 1441 (2002) envisages that UNMOVIC and the IAEA will submit reports to the Council on Iraq's cooperation. The briefings by Mr. Blix and Mr. ElBaradei to the Council on 27 January were not meant to be conclusive. We believe that we should await their conclusions, positive or negative. Under resolution 1441 (2002), what the inspectors' report is to constitute is the essential basis for the judgement that the Security Council is supposed to make regarding Iraqi compliance.

The international community is justified in seeking to bring about the earliest possible compliance by Iraq with the Council's resolutions prescribing the elimination of its weapons of mass destruction. At the same time, as the primary organ responsible for the maintenance of international peace and security, the Security Council must bear in mind other imperatives.

The first imperative is to ameliorate the suffering and ensure the welfare of the Iraqi people. They have suffered too much for too long; they should not suffer any more. The second is to preserve the unity and territorial integrity of Iraq. Any erosion of Iraq's integrity could have devastating effects on regional and global peace and stability. The third is to preserve the political and economic stability of the region, including through the resolution of other outstanding issues and conflicts in the area, including the dispute in South Asia over Jammu and Kashmir.

In a statement issued this morning in Islamabad, the Prime Minister of Pakistan, Mir Zafarullah Khan Jamali, stated that

> "The Muslim *umma*, from the shores of the Atlantic to the Pacific, is deeply worried that war may break out, and is worried about its implications not only for the people of Iraq, but for the future stability and polity of the Islamic countries. At this time the need for inter-civilizational harmony has never been greater".

The Prime Minister went on to say that

> "A heavy burden has been placed on the international community, particularly on Security Council members and on Iraq, to take timely, effective and adequate steps to surmount this challenge to peace and stability. To avert a disaster and tragedy for the Iraqi people, Pakistan calls upon President Saddam Hussain to do his utmost and to put the Iraqi people first. It is imperative that President Saddam weigh all options, to save the people of Iraq from death and destruction on an unprecedented scale".

I would like to conclude by saying that at this critical moment Pakistan wishes to reaffirm its determination to act, within and outside the Council, on the basis of the principles of the United Nations Charter, which include the pacific resolution of disputes, the full implementation of Security Council resolutions, the promotion of the well-being of people and the preservation of international peace and stability.

The President: I now call on Her Excellency Ms. Ana Palacio Vallelersundi, Minister for Foreign Affairs of Spain.

Ms. Palacio Vallelersundi (Spain) (*spoke in Spanish*): Allow me to join those who have spoken before me in congratulating Germany on its assumption of the presidency of the Security Council, another European presidency at a moment of whose importance for the future of the Council and for the international community as a whole we are all aware.

I would also like to associate myself with those who have expressed their gratitude for the information provided by Secretary of State Colin Powell. But I would first of all like to say how important it is that he has brought that information to the Security Council. This once again represents recognition by the United States of America of the importance of keeping the question of Iraq within the framework of the United Nations. Similarly, this reminds us that we are dealing with a responsibility that belongs to the entire international community.

The Secretary of State has put before us compelling data that point to the existence of weapons

of mass destruction and to the consequences of their possible use. Those data also confirm that Iraq is deceiving the international community and that it is not cooperating. Legally speaking, and in the context of the United Nations and of resolution 1441 (2002) in particular, that information leads to the legal conclusion that there has been a flagrant violation of the obligations established in resolution 1441 (2002).

The Secretary of State has also given us information on the links between Saddam Hussain's regime and terrorism. The international community cannot allow a country to acquire components, develop production lines, possess clandestine mobile production units and laboratories or acquire stocks of weapons of mass destruction. We cannot tolerate such a violation of international law, as it endangers international peace and security and undermines the very foundations of non-proliferation regimes that it has taken many decades to establish. Such a violation also jeopardizes the very existence of an international community that is able to organize peaceful coexistence in our global society.

There is only one explanation for the lack of cooperation by Saddam Hussain's regime with the work of verifying his programmes of weapons of mass destruction: that Saddam Hussain has not renounced his plan to use such weapons as he has undoubtedly used them in the past. As a Spaniard, I am particularly concerned that biological and chemical weapons still under Iraqi control, such as the ones shown to us today by Secretary of State Colin Powell, could end up in the hands of terrorists.

The International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA) and the United Nations Monitoring, Verification and Inspection Commission (UNMOVIC) have our full confidence and support. But inspections are not an end in themselves. Rather, they are the means of verifying that Iraq is carrying out effective and complete disarmament of its arsenal of weapons of mass destruction. Inspections will only bear fruit if Iraq cooperates actively. To date, it has not done so.

Time does not mean time for the inspectors. On the contrary, it means an ultimatum to Saddam Hussain's regime that it must disarm voluntarily. As Secretary of State Colin Powell said, the inspectors are not detectives. The inspectors should be the proxies for the international community in witnessing voluntary disarmament. We can consider all the mechanisms, offices, additional inspections and minders we want. But the issue will still be the same: the lack of will on the part of Saddam Hussain's regime to fulfil its disarmament obligations. We will only be deceiving ourselves if we ignore that fact. Therefore, we can, and must, demand a change of political will: full cooperation with regard to disarmament, without delay or subterfuge. What is at stake is the credibility of the Security Council, which the Charter of the United Nations established as the most valuable instrument for the maintenance of peace. The Council is the key to our collective security.

However, for 12 years we have witnessed systematic non-compliance with Security Council resolutions by Saddam Hussain's regime. Spain therefore reiterates that it is imperative to send Saddam Hussain's regime an unequivocal message that non-compliance with the resolutions of the Council and the proliferation of weapons of mass destruction and long-range missiles pose a threat to peace and that, consequently, preserving international peace and security means, as the Council has underscored, the immediate and complete disarmament of Iraq.

A fundamental element of Spain's actions in the current Iraqi crisis is respect for international law, of which Security Council resolutions are an essential part. My Government believes that in spite of Iraq's continued non-compliance with its obligations — which has been made patently clear from the disturbing information just presented to us by Secretary of State Powell — there is still is a chance for peace if Iraq radically modifies its lack of compliance.

Saddam Hussain's regime must understand that if it does not comply with its obligations, then it must confront the grave consequences called for in resolution 1441 (2002). But it should also understand that the full responsibility falls solely upon Saddam Hussain and his willingness to cooperate with the obligations imposed by the international community. That cooperation has heretofore been conspicuously absent. The international community urges him to take advantage of the last chance that has been given to him under resolution 1441 (2002). For the sake of peace in the world, I hope that Saddam Hussain's regime will not miss that opportunity.

The President: I now call on Her Excellency Mrs. Soledad Alvear Valenzuela, the Minister for Foreign Affairs of Chile.

Mrs. Alvear Valenzuela (Chile) (*spoke in Spanish*): Mr. President, may I first of all congratulate you on your assumption of the presidency of the Security Council for the month of February. At the same time, may I express our appreciation to France for the work accomplished in the presidency in January. I am also grateful for the timely convening of this important meeting. We express our appreciation to Secretary of State Colin Powell on his initiative. At the same time, I want to reiterate to the Secretary of State the condolences of the Chilean Government on the tragic accident of the space shuttle *Columbia*.

First of all, I want to express our concern at the grave information that we have just received. It points to a pattern of defiance and resistance on the part of Iraq with regard to fulfilling the demand contained in resolution 687 (1991) of 3 April 1991 — that is, its unconditional, immediate and verifiable disarmament. After more than 12 years of resolutions by this Council reiterating that demand, resolution 1441 (2002) gave Iraq, in terms that allow no double interpretation, a final opportunity to fulfil its disarmament obligations. We cannot, therefore, fail to express our dismay at the fact that the Iraqi regime — which has dragged its people into two bloody wars and has already impassively sat by while its people have suffered from prolonged sanctions — is now exposing those people to the risk of new and greater suffering.

My Government reiterates its conviction, as a fundamental point, that the Security Council's resolutions must be complied with fully. Attempts at partial compliance with the demands of an unequivocal text, at following a piecemeal approach in cooperating with the inspection process, at negotiating every piece of information as though this were a voluntary concession, or, worse yet, at attempting to watch over, deceive or thwart the process — all such attempts are violations of the resolution and open challenges to the international community.

It is our understanding that such an attitude derives from the totalitarian nature of an oppressive regime that has subjugated its people for decades and unjustly deprived them of access to opportunities appropriate to their proven wisdom and cultural richness. This is why, in his report on 27 January, Mr. Hans Blix affirmed that "Iraq appears not to have come to a genuine acceptance — not even today" of disarmament (S/PV.4692, p. 3).

My country has expressed the need to continue with the inspection process so that the inspections can, with the sense of urgency required under resolution 1441 (2002), arrive at conclusions that allow the Council to adopt appropriate measures at the proper time, in accordance with that urgency. Furthermore, we have stated that the inspections can impose their logic of peace only if a high degree of pressure is kept on the Iraqi regime regarding the consequences that it might suffer because of an attitude of sustained non-compliance with Council resolutions.

We believe that it is up to the Executive Chairman of the United Nations Monitoring, Verification and Inspection Commission (UNMOVIC), in accordance with the provisions of operative paragraph 11 of resolution 1441 (2002),

> "to report immediately to the Council any interference by Iraq with inspection activities, as well as any failure by Iraq to comply with its disarmament obligations, including its obligations regarding inspections under this resolution".

This Council's decision-making capacity will gain if the inspections immediately focus on the main unresolved disarmament issues. In this regard, it is indispensable to present Iraq with demands for action and information, demands that do not allow any delay or distortion whatsoever. That can define the course of the inspections and their viability.

In this regard, the accusations levelled a few moments ago by United States Secretary of State Colin Powell require urgent, precise clarification by Iraq. It is Chile's understanding that the Security Council, in exercising its responsibilities with regard to collective security, must use and promote the mechanisms of cooperation and multilateral consultation. For this reason, we support maintaining multilateral control of this crisis in the framework of the principles and purposes of the United Nations Charter, international law and the relevant Security Council resolutions.

The adoption of resolution 1441 (2002) demonstrated the unity of which this body is capable. Therefore, we see the need to persevere in the effort to build a common position, which, in our opinion, would be the measure of the international community's success in achieving the objective of the disarmament of Iraq.

We are entering a crucial stage in a situation that involves many fears for the region and the stability of the world. As a peace-loving country, we must express our concern at the consequences of ending the diplomatic channels — consequences for the world, for the region and, in particular, for the security of the Iraqi civilian population, who have suffered so long from the effect of sanctions with a high human cost.

We cannot fail to reiterate that, as history often teaches us, more than the leaders, whose actions give rise to war, it is their peoples who suffer the direct consequences. If there is no radical change in Iraq's cooperation, this Council must use every means available in order to preserve the governing principles of international law.

Chile once again appeals to Iraq to consider its responsibility with regard to the main objective of this Organization and of those who make up this Council: the preservation of peace and international security.

The President: I now call on His Excellency Mr. Georges Ribelo Chikoti, Vice-Minister for Foreign Affairs of Angola.

Mr. Chikoti (Angola): Since I am the first member of the Angolan Government to be on American soil since 1 February, allow me to express my condolences to the American Government and people on the disaster and loss of life sustained in the space shuttle *Colombia* accident that took place on that day.

Allow me also to congratulate you, Sir, in your capacity as President of the Council during this important meeting. We hope that, under your country's presidency, we will meet the enormous challenges facing us. I should like also to extend our thanks to France for the outstanding manner in which it conducted the Council's meetings during the month of January.

It is, at this crucial moment, important for me and for my Government to recognize the important initiative taken last week by President George Bush to send Secretary of State Colin Powell to share with us today the compelling intelligence information of which we have just been apprised.

The question of Iraq has for 20 years been at the centre of the concerns of the international community. In the 1980s, Angola expressed concern at the war waged against Iran, and later joined in the universal condemnation of the invasion of Kuwait and took part in the joint action by the Security Council and the international community against Iraq's armament programme. We all know — and it is our conviction — that, had its goals been reached, it would have led to a global catastrophe of unimaginable consequences.

This gathering therefore constitutes a particularly important moment in this joint action. Reports and clarifications were provided to the Council by weapons inspectors a few days ago, and earlier today we received supplementary information from the United States Administration through Secretary Powell concerning the situation in Iraq.

We welcome the fact that this information was presented directly to the Security Council through the respected and authoritative voice of Secretary Powell. We deem this development to be a very significant contribution that will surely enable the Security Council to take the important decisions which the world expects with an even greater sense of responsibility and of purpose.

The pertinent information presented by Secretary of State Colin Powell adds new elements which should make clear the importance of continuing to monitor the situation and of being prepared to take a position within the framework of the Security Council.

The provisions contained in resolution 1441 (2002), in particular in operative paragraph 10, request Member States to give full support to the United Nations Monitoring, Verification and Inspection Commission (UNMOVIC) and to the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA) in the discharge of their mandates, including by providing any information related to prohibited programmes or other aspects of their mandates; we have just seen an example of this.

Following the presentation of the reports of UNMOVIC and the IAEA, we expressed our appreciation — which we reiterate today — to Mr. Blix and to Mr. ElBaradei, as well to the inspection teams in Iraq, for their efforts and commitment in the discharge of the important mandate entrusted to them by the Council.

My delegation recognized, as did the inspectors, the cooperation of Iraq in providing the necessary assistance for the establishment of the inspections infrastructure, whose importance should not be minimized. However, we expect and strongly urge Iraq

to do much more. Iraq's substantive cooperation with inspections is an obligation under the terms of resolution 1441 (2002). Only through such cooperation can Iraq prove beyond any doubt that it is ready to embark on a programme for the elimination of its missile, chemical and biological weapons.

The Security Council needs a clear and unambiguous answer from Iraq to the outstanding questions raised by the inspectors.

It is our assessment that the strengthening of the inspections and the enlargement of their scope is an important development and an additional opportunity to enhance their efficiency. The inspections — if they enjoy the full political support of the Security Council and of the international community, and if adequate time is allowed for thoughtful action — can be a powerful tool in our common endeavour to meet the objective of disarming Iraq, averting war and reinforcing international peace and security.

The overall picture of the situation, in our view, makes clear the need for the continuation of the inspections programme. In this respect, we urge Iraq, the United Nations inspectors and those countries with the means to do so to pursue their efforts urgently and in a more aggressive and cooperative way, so that information can be obtained that is conducive to an accurate identification of weapons of mass destruction and their elimination, in accordance with the pertinent Security Council resolutions.

In this context, it is relevant to call the attention of the world to the example set by the African countries, which, through the Pelindaba agreement, decided to free the continent of weapons of mass destruction.

We deem it essential for the Security Council, in order to preserve peace, to maintain its unity and to continue to extend its political support to the inspections. This must be done with determination and perseverance, in order to attain the goals set by the international community with respect to Iraq.

The question of Iraq poses a real threat to international peace and security. However, we still believe that a peaceful solution can be found. My country, Angola, is living testimony of the disastrous consequences of war. More than 2 million people died. There are 4 million internally displaced persons, more than 80,000 persons mutilated, more than 100,000 orphans, and a total and unimaginable destruction of the physical infrastructure. That reality, so vividly present in our minds, leads us to ponder the severe consequences of a war.

Directly concerning the subject matter under consideration today, I would like to refer to the pertinent paragraph of the declaration just adopted by the summit meeting of the African Union Central Organ, held in Addis Ababa, affirming that

> "a military confrontation in Iraq would be a destabilizing factor for the whole region and would have far-reaching economic and security consequences for all the countries of the world and, particularly, for those of Africa [and the Middle East]."

My delegation therefore thinks that we should persevere on the road towards a peaceful resolution of the question of Iraq. War would demonstrate a failure of our multilateral system based on respect for the United Nations Charter by all nations.

The option we support is to follow the path that allows an effective role for the Security Council within the framework of a multilateral approach to the question of peacefully disarming Iraq. We believe that at the present stage we have not exhausted all the options before we accept the inevitability of a war.

Mr. Wehbe (Syrian Arab Republic) (*spoke in Arabic*): Allow me at the outset to extend our sincere condolences to the Government and the people of the United States of America following the tragic disaster that befell the space shuttle *Columbia*.

It is my privilege to read out the text of a statement by Mr. Farouk Al-Shara', Deputy Prime Minister and Minister for Foreign Affairs of the Syrian Arab Republic. It was impossible for him to participate in person in our important deliberations.

> "It gives me pleasure to congratulate you, Sir, on your country's assumption of the presidency of the Council for the month of February. I express my confidence that your presiding over our deliberations will lead us to a just settlement of the issues on our agenda and, in particular, a peaceful settlement to the question of Iraq based on the implementation of Council resolution 1441 (2002), which is our common objective.

"It is also my pleasure to thank France, a friend of Syria, for successfully presiding over the Council's deliberations last month. We thank France for its efforts, in more than one place in the world, to favour peace over war.

"We listened attentively to the information and opinions presented by Mr. Colin Powell, Secretary of State of the United States of America. Since time does not permit me to discuss the content of the statement, we believe that the way to ascertain the facts and to reach a conclusion with respect to irrefutable evidence is to transmit such information to the United Nations Monitoring, Verification and Inspection Commission (UNMOVIC) and to the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA). We urge all Member States that have accurate information on Iraq's weapons of mass destruction to submit such information to the inspectors so that they can assess its accuracy and inform the Council accordingly. We hope that they will not be inundated with information or opinions that do not stand up to the facts in order not to confuse them or distract them from the tasks entrusted to them by the Council.

"The Council unanimously adopted resolution 1441 (2002). It is no secret that Syria joined the consensus on that resolution after receiving guarantees and clarifications from permanent members of the Council that voting in favour of the resolution meant proceeding seriously towards a peaceful resolution regarding Iraq's disarmament of all weapons of mass destruction and that the resolution was not a pretext for waging war against Iraq. The fact that some members of the Council speak about the need to adopt a second resolution is, in our view, further confirmation of those clarifications and guarantees.

"Nevertheless, two months after the adoption of the resolution and the resumption of inspections, which have made reasonable progress and have not yet met with any insurmountable obstacles, our region is at a grave crossroads, teetering between peace and war. Thinking that war is one of the options before the Council is in itself proof of our collective failure to peacefully implement resolution 1441 (2002). We believe that the Council can still make great efforts to reach a peaceful solution to the question of Iraq compatible with the Security Council's mandate to maintain international peace and security.

"Syria believes that the existence of the option of war is proof not only of the Council's failure to fulfil its duties but also of the failure of the international system, which at this stage should rely more than ever on the Charter of the United Nations as an indispensable point of reference in ensuring that peace prevails all over the world.

"Syria still believes in the possibility of arriving at a peaceful settlement that spares Iraq war and spares the region the dangerous repercussions of such a war. Such a settlement would guarantee the implementation of resolution 1441 (2002); it would save the lives of thousands of potential innocent victims in Iraq, as well as those of the soldiers who have crossed continents, bringing them safely back to their families.

"Our commitment to peace is compatible with the approach of the Security Council, which in December 2002 adopted a presidential statement on the protection of civilians in armed conflict (S/PRST/2002/41) and a few days ago adopted a resolution on the protection of children in armed conflicts (resolution 1460 (2003)). At a time when our Council is adopting one statement after another to save innocent people in many parts of the world, it is truly odd that we can discuss going to war against Iraq, which no longer occupies the territories of others or threatens it neighbours, and at a time when Israel still occupies Palestinian, Lebanese and Syrian territories in violation of the Charter and resolutions of the United Nations and periodically threatens its neighbours.

"Syria has been kept informed of the work of the inspectors and of Iraqi cooperation with those inspectors. Those who believe that inspections in any part of the world can be free of occasional problems and obstacles are completely mistaken. Nevertheless, after listening to the reports of Mr. Blix and Mr. ElBaradei, we ask whether the obstacles to which they referred are insurmountable. Do they truly warrant a destructive war against Iraq? This is an important

question. Through statements by its senior officials, Iraq has expressed its readiness to continue to cooperate, to enhance cooperation and to make extra efforts to find acceptable solutions for existing problems in order to ensure that the inspectors can carry out their tasks as established by the Security Council.

"That requires that both parties — Iraq and the inspectors — build a common denominator of trust based on Iraq's cooperation with the inspectors, so that they can carry out their task as soon as possible, on the understanding that that will be in the interests of all concerned parties. In return, the inspectors' pursuit of their work, objectively and in a way that respects the sensitivities of the Iraqi people, would definitely build trust between the two parties, which is a desired goal.

"Therefore, Syria calls upon the Security Council to continue to support the work of the inspectors and to give them sufficient time to carry out their task. Syria emphasizes Iraq's commitment to continue to cooperate actively with the inspectors and to provide everything required under resolution 1441 (2002). In parallel, the Council must take necessary measures to lift the sanctions imposed on the Iraqi people under paragraph 22 of resolution 687 (1991) and must activate paragraph 14 of that resolution, which calls for the declaration of the Middle East as a zone free from all weapons of mass destruction — nuclear, bacteriological and chemical — without excepting any State, including Israel, which alone has acquired all of those lethal weapons.

"Syria has made strenuous efforts, and has engaged in regional and international contacts at the highest level, so that we can arrive at a peaceful solution to the Iraqi question, based on implementation of resolution 1441 (2002). Syria has also worked with Iraq's neighbouring countries, which have expressed readiness to cooperate with the Council in efforts to arrive at a peaceful settlement of the Iraqi question. The deliberations held in Istanbul proved that Iraq does not constitute a threat to its neighbours. The message of Iraq's neighbours to the world was "no" to war and "yes" to peaceful solutions based on the implementation of Security Council resolutions. That message is extremely significant, because it comes from a region that has suffered under the scourge of many wars and that is still suffering from the continued policy of occupation and destruction against the defenceless Palestinian people, its property and its legitimate rights.

"The world's peoples look forward to our deliberations, hoping for a peaceful settlement to the Iraqi question — a settlement that will save the lives of thousands of Iraqis and other people should the military option, outside the framework of international legitimacy, be exercised. Let us all work for peace, because we can attain peace if we have the good faith, the determination and the political will to do so. Those elements are to be found in most members of the Council, which was entrusted by the Charter with maintaining international peace and security. That is what Syria and the other Arab countries are trying to bring about, and it is what we hope the Council and the rest of the international community will also work towards."

Mr. Traoré (Guinea) (*spoke in French*): At the outset, Mr. President, I should like to convey to you the apologies of your Guinean colleague, Foreign Minister François Fall, who, for reasons beyond his control, was unable to take part in this important meeting. I should also like, on behalf of the Government and the people of Guinea, to reiterate our sincere condolences to the Government and the people of the United States and to the families of the victims of the tragic accident that befell the space shuttle *Columbia* on 1 February 2003. In addition, I should like to wish a warm welcome to you, Mr. President, and to reiterate my delegation's sincere congratulations on your assumption of the presidency of the Council. You may be assured of our full cooperation.

To France, I wish to reaffirm my delegation's appreciation of the outstanding way in which it conducted the Council's activities last month. I should also like to welcome the presence among us of the Secretary-General, Mr. Kofi Annan, and of the other important personalities around this table.

The organization of this meeting on the situation of Iraq — the fifth gathering in 10 days — rightly attests to that question's importance for the Council. My country is grateful to the Government of the United

States for its initiative to share with the States Members of the Organization intelligence and other information concerning Iraq's weapons programmes. My delegation takes note of the important statement just made by the Secretary of State of the United States, Mr. Colin Powell. It will make an immediate report to the competent authorities with a view to a proper evaluation.

We continue to hope that other States will follow the lead of the United States by making available to the inspectors any information that they might have. That is one of the recommendations of resolution 1441 (2002), which, if it had been fully implemented, would have already allowed the inspectors to make more progress on the ground and thus to advance towards their goal.

On 27 January, my delegation followed with attention and interest the presentation by Mr. Blix and Mr. ElBaradei of their progress report on the inspections. My delegation's examination of that report enabled us to make certain observations, some of which should be recalled. From the point of view of procedure and form, progress has been made. After two months of work on the ground, we note that, thanks to the cooperation of the Iraqi authorities, the inspectors had easy access to more than 200 sites, including presidential sites and private residences. That also aided in the establishment of infrastructure that the inspectors need to carry out their tasks, including by facilitating the establishment of offices in Baghdad and in Mosul. That enabled the United Nations Monitoring, Verification and Inspection Commission (UNMOVIC) and the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA) to make a partial evaluation of the Iraqi arsenal, four years after the departure of the United Nations Special Commission (UNSCOM).

With regard to substantive questions, there is still a way to go. Indeed, many questions remain in the biological, chemical and ballistic areas. In particular, it is important to state that, according to the inspectors themselves, the Iraqi declaration of 7 December 2002 is inadequate, because it merely repeats information earlier transmitted to UNSCOM, contains little that is new, and is of marginal use. The interviews of scientists are not taking place to the satisfaction of the inspectors. The U-2 planes cannot carry out reconnaissance flights. In brief, the inspectors have confronted a series of difficulties in their work.

In the light of those elements, we must state that Iraqi cooperation has been much more forthcoming on questions of procedure than on those of substance. That is why we appeal unequivocally to Iraq to abide scrupulously by its obligations under the provisions of resolution 1441 (2002). It must resolve to move from passive to active cooperation with the inspectors and to realize that frank and more determined cooperation remains the key to a peaceful solution to the crisis.

More specifically, the Baghdad authorities must give precise responses to the many questions that are still pending — for example, by providing convincing evidence of the unilateral destruction of certain biological and chemical weapons; by encouraging scientists and experts who took part in weapons programmes to submit to private interviews, according to the modalities set forth in resolution 1441 (2002); by providing, without delay, an updated, credible list of all scientists associated with weapons programmes; and, finally, by authorizing reconnaissance flights by U-2 planes.

Furthermore, while the promise of better cooperation that was made on 20 January is encouraging, the Iraqi authorities must translate it into concrete, verifiable and sustained action, because the international community, having learned from the procrastination of the past, cannot be satisfied by mere words. Moreover, my delegation believes that the possibility of the suspension and lifting of sanctions should encourage Iraq to cooperate with the inspectors in order to alleviate the ordeal and suffering of its people.

The existence of many grey areas, on the one hand, and the relative progress made on the ground, on the other, prompt my delegation to state that the inspections must go on. To that end, my delegation urges UNMOVIC and IAEA to pursue their efforts to explore every avenue opened by the inspections and to fulfil the goal of their mission. In providing them with a clear and strengthened mandate, resolution 1441 (2002) also gave them the means to succeed in that mission.

My country, Guinea, has always favoured the peaceful settlement of crises and of the Iraqi crisis in particular. I feel compelled to restate that position, because my delegation believes that there is still a chance for a peaceful settlement and that we must seize it. We reiterate our full confidence in and full support

for Mr. Blix and Mr. ElBaradei, as well as for their respective teams, and remain convinced that they will continue to act with unflagging rigor and professionalism in the fulfilment of their mandate.

In conclusion, we are now at a crucial moment for the maintenance of international peace and security, the foundation of our shared Organization. We must cherish that imperative and strive together in unity to build a world of peace and cooperation.

The President: I shall now make a statement in my capacity as Vice-Chancellor and Minister for Foreign Affairs of Germany.

Allow me to express my sincere condolences on the tragic loss of life in the accident of the *Columbia* space shuttle to the families and to the Governments and peoples of the United States and Israel.

I would like to thank Secretary of State Colin Powell for the information he has just given us. The place and timing of this detailed account underline once more that the Security Council is and remains the centre of decision-making on the Iraq crisis. Germany supports this approach. Given the implications they could have for future decisions, the findings have to be examined carefully. We can already see that they coincide in part with information that we also have. They are based on a close exchange of information.

It is now decisive that the United Nations inspectors also be provided with this extensive material, insofar as that has not yet happened. They have to work with this information to be able to clarify the unresolved questions quickly and fully. And Iraq has to answer the elements which were provided today by our colleague Colin Powell to the Security Council. The more expert information the inspection teams have at their disposal, the more targeted their work can be. Thus, from the outset, Germany, too, has passed on the information to Hans Blix, Mohamed ElBaradei and their teams.

The Security Council has been dealing with Iraq for 12 years. As a matter of principle, the unity of the Council is of central importance in this context. Baghdad has time and again violated the obligations laid down in the relevant Council resolutions. Nor do we hold any illusions on the inhumane and brutal nature of Saddam Hussain's dictatorship. Under his rule, Iraq has attacked its neighbours Kuwait and Iran, fired missiles at Israel and deployed poison gas against Iran and its own Kurdish population. The regime is terrible for the Iraqi people. That is why a policy of containment, sanctions and effective military control of the no-fly zones has been implemented since the Gulf War. Iraq must comply with all relevant Security Council resolutions in their entirety and completely disarm its weapons of mass destruction potential.

The presence of the inspectors in Iraq has already effectively reduced the danger of that potential. Nevertheless, the aim of resolution 1441 (2002) is the full and lasting disarmament of Iraq. In his latest report, Hans Blix listed many open questions. The regime in Baghdad must give clear answers to all these concrete questions without delay.

Despite all the difficulties, United Nations efforts to disarm Iraq in the past were not without success. In the 1990s, the inspectors were able to destroy more weapons of mass destruction capacities than did the Gulf War. The threat potential of Iraq to the region was thus clearly reduced. The current basis for the inspections is laid down in resolutions 1284 (1999) and 1441 (2002). The weapons inspectors from the United Nations Monitoring, Verification and Inspection Commission (UNMOVIC) and the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA) have powers that reach further than ever before. They have to be given a real chance and the time they need to fully exhaust the possibilities.

Chief Inspector Blix and IAEA head ElBaradei will travel to Iraq again next weekend and thereafter update us. The success of that trip will be of paramount importance. It will depend crucially on the full cooperation of Baghdad. Quite a few States suspect that Saddam Hussain's regime is withholding relevant information and concealing military capabilities. This strong suspicion has to be dispelled beyond any doubt. That is exactly why resolution 1441 (2002) provides for the instrument of inspections in Iraq by UNMOVIC and the IAEA.

The dangers of a military action and its consequences are plain to see. Precisely because of the effectiveness of the work of the inspectors, we must continue to seek a peaceful solution to the crisis.

In the world of the twenty-first century, the United Nations is key to conflict prevention, crisis management and peace building. On the basis of resolution 1441 (2002) and in the light of practical experience, we need to enhance the instruments of

inspection and control. We need a tough regime of intensive inspections that can guarantee the full and lasting disarmament of Iraq's weapons of mass destruction. By tightening inspections, we are creating an opportunity for a peaceful solution. Such a tough system of inspections could also be effectively applied by the Security Council in other cases. Our French colleague made some very interesting proposals on this matter which deserve our further consideration.

Moreover, we ought to support all endeavours of States in the region that are currently engaging in considerable diplomatic efforts to bring the Iraqi Government to fully implement the resolutions. Iraq has to disarm openly, peacefully and in cooperation with the inspectors without any delay.

I now resume my functions as President of the Security Council.

I call on the representative of Iraq.

Mr. Aldouri (Iraq) (*spoke in Arabic*): My delegation congratulates you, Sir, on your assumption of the presidency of the Council for this month. We wish you success in your work amid these extraordinarily difficult international circumstances.

We should have liked to have been granted sufficient time, commensurate with the gravity of the statement made by the United States Secretary of State in his presentation, and not just a few minutes to rebut a statement that lasted 90 minutes. Nevertheless, Iraq will provide detailed and technical explanatory answers to the allegations made in that statement. I shall be polite and brief.

The pronouncements in Mr. Powell's statement on weapons of mass destruction are utterly unrelated to the truth and the reality on the ground. No new information was provided; mere sound recordings cannot be confirmed as genuine. Council members may have seen me smile when I heard some of those recordings; they contain certain words that I will not attempt to translate here. However, those incorrect allegations, unnamed and unknown sources, schemes and presumptions are all in line with United States policy, which is directed towards one known objective.

In the interview that he granted yesterday to former British Minister Tony Benn, President Saddam Hussain reiterated that Iraq is completely free from weapons of mass destruction — a statement repeated by numerous Iraqi officials for more than a decade.

Mr. Powell could have spared himself, his team and the Security Council a great deal of effort by presenting those allegations directly to the United Nations Monitoring, Verification and Inspection Commission (UNMOVIC) and the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA), in accordance with the provisions of paragraph 10 of Security Council resolution 1441 (2002). He could have left the inspectors to work in peace and quiet, to investigate without media pressure. At any rate, the forthcoming visit of Mr. Blix and Mr. ElBaradei on 8 and 9 February will provide another opportunity to test the validity of those allegations. Ongoing inspections have shown that previous allegations and reports from the United States and Britain were false.

Iraq submitted an accurate, comprehensive and updated 12,000-page declaration that included detailed information about previous Iraqi programmes, as well as updated information about Iraqi industries in various fields.

The inspectors began their activities intensively in Iraq on 27 November 2002, with more than 250 UNMOVIC and IAEA staff, including more than 100 inspectors. As of 4 February 2003, the inspection teams had conducted 575 inspections throughout Iraq, covering 321 sites. The sites singled out by President Bush on 12 September 2002 and by British Prime Minister Tony Blair in the same month, as well as in the United States Central Intelligence Agency (CIA) report of October 2002, were at the top of the list of sites inspected by the inspection teams. Inspectors discovered that none of the allegations contained in those reports was true. Thus, the truth and accuracy of Iraq's declaration that it was free from weapons of mass destruction have been documented by the two technical agencies entrusted by the Security Council with undertaking that task.

It is well known that inspection teams took samples of water, soil, plants, air and factory and production remnants from vast areas, including cities, villages, highways, farms, factories and universities throughout Iraq — north, south, east and west. UNMOVIC and IAEA analyses of those samples concluded that there was no indication of proscribed chemical, biological or radiological agents or, indeed, of any other proscribed activities in any part of Iraq.

Mr. Blix confirmed in his statement to *The New York Times* on 30 January 2003 that the inspections did

not support any of the scenarios alleged by Mr. Colin Powell — that Iraqi officials were moving proscribed material within or out of Iraq with the goal of concealing it. He confirmed that he did not find sufficient reason to believe that Iraq was sending scientists out of Iraq to prevent them from being interviewed and that he had no reason to believe that President Bush was correct in saying in his State of the Union address that Iraqi intelligence agents were posing as scientists for the interviews. We would like to reiterate that Iraq encourages its scientists to submit to interviews requested by UNMOVIC and the IAEA.

As for the existence of the mobile laboratories alleged by Secretary Powell this morning, just yesterday Mr. Blix stated that to date UNMOVIC had found no proof of the presence of such mobile units.

As regards the U-2 overflights and the controversy that has developed in that connection, Iraq does not object to such flights for the purpose of conducting inspection activities. Rather, the objection is that United States and British warplanes are imposing illegal no-fly zones, contrary to Security Council resolutions. To overcome that obstacle, it would be enough for such warplanes to suspend their flights during U-2 flights. Iraq cannot be held responsible for those flights.

The allegation that trucks leave sites prior to the arrival of inspection teams is false. Inspections occur suddenly, without prior notification to the Iraqi side. Furthermore, UNMOVIC and the IAEA have their own sources that provide satellite imagery, and they also use helicopters for surveillance and inspection activities. We therefore believe that those two agencies are very well informed about what takes place on the ground in Iraq. It is important to remind the Council that weapons of mass destruction programmes are not like an aspirin pill — something that can be easily hidden. Rather, they require huge production facilities for research and development, weaponization and deployment. Such facilities cannot be concealed. Inspectors have criss-crossed all of Iraq and found no evidence of that.

As regards the sound recordings, suffice it to say that scientific and technical progress has reached a level that would allow for the fabrication of such allegations and for their presentation in the way that Mr. Powell presented them. Anyone can be recorded, at any time and anywhere in the world.

As for the supposed relationship between Iraq and the Al Qaeda organization, I would like to note what President Saddam Hussain has said:

> "If we had a relationship with Al Qaeda and we believed in that relationship, we would not be ashamed to admit it. We have no relationship with Al Qaeda".

I would like now to refer to a recent statement by a United States official as reported in *The New York Times* three days ago. He stated that analysts at the CIA have complained that Administration officials have exaggerated reports on weapons of mass destruction in Iraq, and particularly on Iraq's presumed relationship with Al Qaeda, in order to bolster their case for war.

I would like to add that Mr. Jack Straw has ignored intelligence reports from his own Government stating that there is no relationship between Iraq and Al Qaeda.

Mr. Powell's assertion that Iraq used chemical weapons against its own people particularly surprised me, given that a CIA official unmasked the truth on 31 January — just a few days ago — in *The New York Times*. He stated that the United States Administration has known since 1988 that Iraq did not use chemical weapons against its own people for one simple reason: it does not have the chemical weapon that was used in the Halabja incident.

In conclusion, I want to say that the obvious goal behind the holding of this meeting and the presentation of false allegations by the Secretary of State of the United States was to sell the idea of war and aggression against my country, Iraq, without providing any legal, moral or political justification. This was primarily an attempt to sway United States public opinion — and world public opinion generally — in favour of launching a hostile attack against Iraq.

In return, Iraq offers security and peace and reiterates before the members of the Security Council our commitment to continue our proactive cooperation with the inspection teams in order to make it possible for them to complete their tasks as soon as possible so as to verify that Iraq is free of weapons of mass destruction, lift the unjust sanctions imposed against us, ensure respect for our national security and guarantee regional security by ridding the whole Middle East of weapons of mass destruction, including Israel's huge arsenal of weapons of mass destruction.

in accordance with the provisions of paragraph 14 of Security Council resolution 687 (1991).

The President: There are no further speakers inscribed on my list. The Security Council has thus concluded the present stage of its consideration of the item on its agenda.

Before adjourning, may I remind Council members of the luncheon that my delegation will have the pleasure of hosting in the Delegates' Dining Room.

The meeting rose at 2.10 p.m.

United Nations S/PV.4702

Security Council

Fifty-eighth year

Provisional

4702nd meeting

Thursday, 6 February 2003, 10 a.m.

New York

President:	Mr. Pleuger	(Germany)
Members:	Angola	Mr. Gaspar Martins
	Bulgaria	Mr. Tafrov
	Cameroon	Mr. Belinga-Eboutou
	Chile	Mr. Maquieira
	China	Mr. Zhang Yishan
	France	Mr. Duclos
	Guinea	Mr. Traoré
	Mexico	Mr. Aguilar Zinser
	Pakistan	Mr. Akram
	Russian Federation	Mr. Lavrov
	Spain	Mrs. Menéndez
	Syrian Arab Republic	Mr. Wehbe
	United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland	Mr. Thomson
	United States of America	Mr. Williamson

Agenda

Security Council resolutions 1160 (1998), 1199 (1998), 1203 (1998), 1239 (1999) and 1244 (1999)

Report of the Secretary-General on the United Nations Interim Administration Mission in Kosovo (S/2003/113)

This record contains the text of speeches delivered in English and of the interpretation of speeches delivered in the other languages. The final text will be printed in the *Official Records of the Security Council*. Corrections should be submitted to the original languages only. They should be incorporated in a copy of the record and sent under the signature of a member of the delegation concerned to the Chief of the Verbatim Reporting Service, room C-154A.

03-23796 (E)

The meeting was called to order at 10.15 a.m.

Adoption of the agenda

The agenda was adopted.

Security Council resolutions 1160 (1998), 1199 (1998), 1203 (1998), 1239 (1999) and 1244 (1999)

Report of the Secretary-General on the United Nations Interim Administration Mission in Kosovo (S/2003/113)

The President: I should first of all like to welcome the presence at this meeting of the Secretary-General, His Excellency Mr. Kofi Annan.

I should like to inform the Council that I have received letters from the representatives of Greece, Norway and Serbia and Montenegro in which they request to be invited to participate in the discussion of the item on the Council's agenda. In conformity with the usual practice, I propose, with the consent of the Council, to invite those representatives to participate in the discussion, without the right to vote, in accordance with the relevant provisions of the Charter and rule 37 of the Council's provisional rules of procedure.

There being no objection, it is so decided.

At the invitation of the President, Mr. Saharcic (Serbia and Montenegro) took a seat at the Council table; Mr. Vassilakis (Greece) and Mr. Strommen (Norway) took the seats reserved for them at the side of the Council Chamber.

The President: In accordance with the understanding reached in the Council's prior consultations, and in the absence of objection, I shall take it that the Security Council agrees to extend an invitation under rule 39 of its provisional rules of procedure to Mr. Michael Steiner, Special Representative of the Secretary-General for Kosovo and Head of the United Nations Interim Administration Mission in Kosovo.

I see no objection. It is so decided.

I invite Mr. Steiner to take a seat at the Council table.

The Security Council will now begin its consideration of the item on its agenda. The Council is meeting in accordance with the understanding reached in its prior consultations.

Members have before them document S/2003/113, which contains the report of the Secretary-General on the United Nations Interim Administration Mission in Kosovo.

At this meeting, the Security Council will hear a briefing by Mr. Michael Steiner, Special Representative of the Secretary-General for Kosovo and Head of the United Nations Interim Administration Mission in Kosovo.

I now give the floor to Mr. Steiner.

Mr. Steiner: What do people in Kosovo want? Last week I visited Ferizaj, the third largest town in Kosovo; Pec/Peje, at the foot of the mountains in the west; and Mitrovica, on the banks of the river Ibar, in the north.

In Ferizaj a baker from a socially owned enterprise asked for a secure job; a student wanted "An end to corruption, so I do not have to buy my place at university". In Peje a shopkeeper told me, "Beat crime". And in Mitrovica a teacher from a minority community said, "I want to move around Kosovo without fear". So, it is jobs, security and respect for multi-ethnicity.

Many politicians know that, and are working hard in the Provisional Institutions all over Kosovo. However, I am concerned that others in Pristina are becoming more assertive about status and status-related competences, and do not concentrate enough on the real bread-and-butter issues.

At the same time, Prime Minister Zoran Djindjic has now changed course in Belgrade by also calling for an early resolution of Kosovo's status, and has requested the return of the Serbian State to Kosovo. As the international community concentrates on standards and on what the people want, politicians focus on status.

In tandem with the changing view in Belgrade, we have seen two contrasting moves on the part of Kosovo Serbs. It is good that we will have the Coalition Povratak back in the Assembly after months of boycott. Serb interests in Kosovo can best be represented through the legitimate institutions.

The second move, a unilateral step by others to set up a union of Serb municipalities in the north of

Kosovo, is having a damaging effect on these interests. This union is based on mono-ethnicity. It has no legal relevance, but it undermines work on decentralization by the Council of Europe, which will be starting its mission in Kosovo this coming Monday.

In the light of these developments, how does the United Nations Interim Administration Mission in Kosovo (UNMIK) address the challenges of 2003? As the Council knows, much has been accomplished in the last 12 months. The Kosovans and the international community can be proud of that. But we need to move further. So, this year we intend to focus on the following areas: standards; the three priorities of jobs, security and real multi-ethnicity; the transfer of power; the establishment of direct dialogue between Pristina and Belgrade; and preparing for European integration.

Turning first to standards: for different reasons, and with opposing ideas of what the resolution should be, some in Pristina and Belgrade now seem to agree on "status first". But what actually counts on the ground is improving quality of life by delivering on the standards, or benchmarks. The Security Council's mission saw this for itself during its recent visit. It is also evident from the quarterly report by the Secretary-General, who was in Kosovo in November. But let us be clear: our focus on standards in no way precludes opening direct talks between Pristina and Belgrade. On the contrary, dialogue with Belgrade is one of the eight benchmarks. As the Secretary-General has said, talks on issues of mutual interest should start as soon as possible.

The handout that members will receive is intended to serve as a baseline indicator against which progress towards the benchmarks can be measured each quarter from now on. It summarizes how we intend to operationalize the process.

While there is general agreement on the goals, the Kosovo institutions have not yet engaged with the benchmarks with sufficient vigour. Several Kosovo Albanian politicians have claimed that Kosovo has already achieved the standards. A senior official has publicly claimed that Kosovo has "risen above the Governments of the region in its approach to returns, property rights and freedom of movement".

The standards to be met must, of course, be realistic and measured against the region's performance. It would be unfair to compare Kosovo with, say, Switzerland. However, as the Security Council mission stressed in December, Kosovo is still a long way from having truly functioning democratic institutions and a society where minorities can fully participate. Obviously, we do not expect the institutions to deliver in areas where they do not have instruments. But public figures can and must be held accountable for a sustained effort to promote the values of the rule of law, for example. We expect them to take a stand against crime, to refrain from extremist statements and to call on the public to cooperate with the police and the courts.

Tacit tolerance of crime and corruption must stop. I hope that, with the Council's help, we can convince political leaders and Kosovo society to embrace the benchmarks as a positive challenge. Kosovo institutions will have to rise to it. They have to understand that only the fulfilment of these standards will make the international community confident that Kosovo is ready for substantial self-government. The fulfilment of these standards is necessary also to remove the causes of future conflict and to make Kosovo a normal European society.

Let me also state here that there are many politicians, public figures and journalists in Kosovo who are very supportive of this course. Their vision is encouraging.

Concerning priorities for 2003, UNMIK's strategy is to focus on the standards that are required for a decent life in Kosovo and on what the people actually want. I will concentrate on the priorities for 2003. The first is crime. Overall levels of serious crime declined significantly in 2002. The number of murders last year was half that of 2001, and the clearance rate of murder cases has risen to more than 80 per cent. However, Kosovo was rocked at the turn of the year by a spate of violence and killings. In the space of four weeks, there were three car bombings. Over the past months there also have been a number of high-profile murders. Some of the victims were witnesses for The Hague or in organized crime cases.

No one is above the law. We are intensifying our attack against organized crime, corruption and politically and ethnically motivated violence. Members of the Kosovo Police Service will use their new skills to participate in the most sensitive areas of the fight against serious and organized crime. They will contribute their knowledge of crime networks in Kosovo and the region. Last Thursday I saw in the

police station in Peć/Pejë that this can work. I am also pleased that members of Italy's Guardia di Finanza have now begun their work in the new Financial Investigation Unit to fight corruption and fraud.

The second priority is the economy. Unemployment continues to be the number-one concern. But jobs can be created only by attracting investment, and investment will come only when investors can be confident that their money will not be lost. This will be the case only when they can rely on the legal system and trust the institutions, and when freedom of movement and property rights apply — in other words, when the standards of a functioning democratic society are met.

Together with the Government, I will seek to do everything possible to develop the legal system, institutions and basis for property rights that are needed to generate investor confidence. Here the privatization process will be key. We also have to make it easier for business to invest in Kosovo. For this, we will be opening an office where investors can get through registration and legal requirements quickly: a one-stop investment shop.

The third priority concerns multi-ethnicity. I am concerned about ethnically defined interest politics on the part of both Kosovo Albanians and Kosovo Serbs, as well as on the part of Belgrade. We cannot allow parallel structures to operate. That is also the reason why we established the UNMIK administration in Mitrovica on 25 November and are introducing the Kosovo Police Service in the northern part of the town. More still needs to be done. However, after three and a half years of hearing of nothing from there aside from the "bridge watchers", the international community is now in control.

Belgrade has been helpful on Mitrovica, but in other areas it continues to support parallel structures operating on a mono-ethnic basis. While insisting that Kosovo is part of Serbia, in reality Belgrade focuses exclusively on the interests of only 10 per cent of Kosovo's population.

But the majority Albanian community in Kosovo has equally failed to take ownership of the interests of the Serb community and other minorities. Minorities are still being harassed. Minorities are still afraid to move freely throughout Kosovo. They often lack access to education, health care, public utilities and jobs. We in UNMIK are working hard to create the conditions for increased returns. In 2003 more returns will be possible. But minority rights and returns need to be supported also by the Provisional Institutions with budget appropriations and concrete programmes. Kosovo must prove that it is creating a multi-ethnic society where every Kosovan, regardless of ethnic origin, can live in security and dignity.

I now turn to the transfer of power. It is good that the Assembly and the other institutions want to take on responsibility. I am ready to hand over all competences I legally can to the Provisional Institutions by the end of this year. But the institutions must make progress against the benchmarks and demonstrate that they are equipped to handle added responsibilities and to really accomplish things.

The municipalities now have more than two years' experience of running local affairs. We will soon be able to fully hand over executive responsibilities to the most successful municipalities, and withdraw into a monitoring and oversight function.

On the central level, UNMIK is carrying out a review of how effectively we have actually handed over real responsibility in the transferred areas. We will also seek to identify, together with the Provisional Institutions, all further areas that can be transferred this year. We will then work out, together with them, how that transfer can best be done. Our principle will be effective empowerment. But it is important that the transfer of authority not take the form of the international community's simply abandoning the Kosovo political structures, losing sight of resolution 1244 (1999).

It is not yet one year since the Government was set up. There is still a lack of effective checks and balances between the executive, the legislative, the judiciary and the media. Minority protection is still weak throughout the institutions. The Government itself has asked for our continued support. Despite our own shortcomings — as, surely, UNMIK makes mistakes — we are still needed in Kosovo.

In addition, there are certain things that I cannot fully transfer to the local institutions. I am mandated to act as guarantor for the equal rights and fair treatment of minorities. Together with KFOR, I am answerable for security and civil order, and I will retain authority for external relations.

I do not believe that 2003 is the time for finally resolving Kosovo's status. But it is the time to lay the groundwork for the political process which, in the end, will determine its status. Dialogue between Pristina and Belgrade on issues of mutual interest is necessary in itself and will help enable political dialogue further down the line. Indeed, paragraph 11 (e) of resolution 1244 (1999) mandates me to promote such a process.

It is crucially important that the Security Council, representing the whole international community, remain in charge of Kosovo until the main objective set out in resolution 1244 (1999) is fulfilled. At the same time, Kosovo must prepare for the process of European integration, together with its neighbours in the region.

The European Union (EU) is expected to outline a more energetic strategy with respect to the Balkans at its Thessaloniki Summit on 21 June. In his letter to the Greek and future Italian EU presidencies, Commission President Romano Prodi calls for an even stronger political commitment of the EU and a clear and unambiguous membership perspective. At a meeting of the international representatives from the region with High Representative Javier Solana and Commissioner Chris Patten, held last week in Brussels, we all saw this as essential for success.

But any engagement by the international community must be matched by an equal engagement of our local partners in fulfilling the standards of a functioning democratic society.

In conclusion, what do the people of Kosovo want? What are our priorities? Jobs, security and multi-ethnicity. This is what the standards are about. This is what the international community wants, and this is what people of Kosovo want.

The President: I thank Michael Steiner for his very comprehensive and interesting statement.

Mr. Duclos (France) (*spoke in French*): I wish, of course, to begin by thanking Mr. Steiner for his briefing, which supplemented the comprehensive report of the Secretary-General. I also welcome the presence of the Secretary-General among us at the beginning of this meeting.

These various elements give the Council a clear picture of the situation in Kosovo two months after the Council's mission.

I would also like to say, by way of preliminary comment, that the presidency of the European Union will be making a statement later on, and I fully associate myself with that statement.

I shall therefore confine myself to three points.

First, we are concerned by the unilateral statements and initiatives undertaken by some in Kosovo and in the region concerning the future of Kosovo. Those statements and initiatives could destabilize the existing situation not only in Kosovo but also throughout the Balkans. In particular, we deplore the efforts being made by some members of the Kosovo Assembly to adopt a declaration concerning the future status of the province, in contravention of resolution 1244 (1999).

Secondly, these developments — which are definitely not a sign of the responsible attitude that the international community expects — merely strengthen our commitment to applying the standards. Meeting those standards is a prerequisite for the question of the final status to be addressed validly, pursuant to resolution 1244 (1999).

In this regard, we thank the Special Representative of the Secretary-General for the clear presentation he has just made concerning arrangements for implementation of those norms. We support in particular the efforts to be made in the area of the rule of law, which goes hand in hand with democracy.

Thirdly and lastly, we wish to voice our support for the activities of the Special Representative of the Secretary-General. We support the priorities that he has set: the combat against crime; economic recovery; and the building of a multi-ethnic society.

In this respect, we underscore the importance of continued endeavours to bring about the orderly return of refugees and displaced persons. We unreservedly support the development of dialogue with the Belgrade authorities on the basis of the principle of cooperation but no interference, and the call for direct consultation between Pristina and Belgrade on practical issues of mutual interest.

Allow me to conclude by calling on all elected members of the autonomous institutions to pool their efforts to build a modern, multi-ethnic and democratic Kosovo, in accordance with UNMIK's criteria and keeping in mind the interests of all the people of Kosovo.

This is the approach that needs to prevail, rather than getting lost in untimely and pointless initiatives which can only isolate the people of Kosovo from the rest of the region and from the European continent, and possibly lose the support of the international community.

Mr. Thomson (United Kingdom): Like my French colleague, I welcome the fact that the Secretary-General was able to be here at the start of this meeting, and I thank him for his report. I am grateful to Michael Steiner for a clear and useful presentation, and I, too, associate my delegation with the statement of the European Union, to be made by our Greek colleague later this morning.

I would also like to say a word of thanks to Norway, and especially to Ambassador Kolby, for the role that they played last year, including on the Council mission to the region.

We reiterate our support for the priorities set out by Michael Steiner, most recently in his television address to Kosovo on 20 January, especially his reiteration of the principle of standards before status, and the need for all parties in Kosovo to work more seriously.

The United Nations Interim Administration Mission in Kosovo (UNMIK), and Michael Steiner leading it, have achieved a good deal over the past three months: UNMIK authority established across the whole of Kosovo; the number of minority judges increased; steps taken by the Kosovo Police Service to assume responsibility for some law-and-order activities; an improved feeling of security on the streets; and easier access across the bridges in Mitrovica. But we have to recognize that we are still a long way from the Security Council's goal of a multi-ethnic Kosovo which could take its place in Europe, along with the rest of the Balkans.

To give just a few examples: the recent cycle of violence — including successful and attempted assassinations and attacks on Orthodox churches — seems to indicate that local extremists feel that they can act with impunity. They cannot and must not. Local leaders need to condemn all such acts of violence and to support the efforts of UNMIK police and the Kosovo Police Service in their efforts to clamp down on this selfish extremism, which hinders Kosovo's development and affects the normal lives of the normal people in Kosovo. We also urge UNMIK and KFOR to tackle this extremism at its roots.

Secondly, the Provisional Institutions of Self-Government at all levels must also cooperate with the International Criminal Tribunal for the Former Yugoslavia and UNMIK if and when any indictments are presented. Compliance is an international commitment, and it will be important for Kosovo to show its political maturity and be seen to be acting within common European Union values.

Thirdly, there is a further way to go on the establishment of a multi-ethnic civil service. Nearly 60 per cent of senior civil-servant posts remained unfilled at the end of 2002. And there is a continuing, substantial task to achieve returns. The Council's mission showed that hard work by all concerned will be needed if returns are to increase in 2003.

My delegation welcomes UNMIK's intention — and Michael Steiner has just confirmed it for us this morning — to transfer further competencies to the Provisional Institutions of Self-Government. We encourage UNMIK to press on with this. But with power comes responsibility. All parties need to work within "standards before status". All parties need to show that they are working towards European standards. Delivering those standards will help to deliver the three priorities that Mr. Steiner has rightly pointed to. All parties need to show that they can carry out their commitments within the existing Constitutional Framework before status negotiations are possible. Prejudging final status, either by declarations in Pristina or Belgrade or by the transformation of the Kosovo Protection Corps into an army, is unacceptable. Kosovo needs to show that it is serious about actually running itself and about integrating minority communities into Government. At the same time, those minorities must demonstrate that they are committed to Kosovo's future.

There can be no progress towards final status without dialogue between the Provisional Institutions of Self-Government and the Government in Belgrade. Initial dialogue should focus on practical issues that directly affect the daily lives of the citizens of Kosovo and of those internally displaced persons who remain outside Kosovo. A key issue will be the rule of law and fighting organized crime, as highlighted in the 25 November 2002 London conference on this subject. Such a dialogue, in a positive, cooperative framework,

will help to create a climate of mutual confidence for looking eventually at wider questions of Kosovo's future.

Mr. Tafrov (Bulgaria) (*spoke in French*): I would first like to thank you, Sir, for convening this meeting of the Council on Kosovo. I also thank Michael Steiner for his briefing, which was very detailed and specific, as usual. It painted an uncompromising picture of the situation in Kosovo, though without any unnecessary pessimism. I also express our thanks for the presence of the Secretary-General at the start of the meeting.

This meeting comes two months after the Council's mission to Kosovo. I think that all those who participated in it were able to see what a good idea that mission was. I would especially like to thank Ambassador Peter Kolby of Norway for his leadership of the mission.

Bulgaria, an associated country of the European Union, fully supports the statement that will be made shortly by the representative of Greece on behalf of the European Union. I shall therefore limit myself to a few brief comments in my national capacity.

Bulgaria is convinced that the excellent work done by the United Nations Interim Administration Mission in Kosovo (UNMIK) and by Mr. Steiner must continue and that the transfer of responsibilities to the Provisional Institutions of Self-Government must continue exactly in the manner just described by Mr. Steiner. The Constitutional Framework is our basic reference point; it contains the benchmarks ensuring the necessary dynamic for this process. For the transfer process to be a success, the Kosovar institutions must continue to expand their administrative and management capacities while ensuring equitable participation by the various ethnic groups. The set of rules of procedure governing the functioning of the administration is indispensable.

Speakers who preceded me spoke of certain acts and of certain ideas, as well as of certain political officials — including representatives of the Kosovo Assembly and the Kosovar Government, but also others elsewhere — who have exceeded their mandates as established by the Constitutional Framework and who have assumed powers falling within the competence of the Special Representative. Those attempts are a source of concern for Bulgaria. We continue to believe that the policy established by the United Nations — "standards before status" and based on the benchmarks — is fundamental to a sustainable resolution of the problem of Kosovo. Like previous speakers, we consider that all those attempts could destabilize Kosovo and prevent the international community from achieving a solution to the problem within the framework of resolution 1244 (1999).

Bulgaria is also concerned by recent acts of violence, including those perpetrated against Orthodox churches, to which Ambassador Thomson referred a moment ago. These acts of violence must cease. They are likely to discourage the Serb community from integrating into the life of Kosovo.

The idea of Serb military representatives and police returning to Kosovo will not likely contribute, in our view, to stabilizing the situation and could have consequences that are hard to predict. Bulgaria believes that the authorities of both Belgrade and Pristina must refrain from hasty political actions that could only aggravate the situation and destabilize Kosovo.

Bulgaria welcomes the establishment of the UNMIK administration in northern Mitrovica. That is a positive sign that may improve life in that city and in the entire region.

The dialogue between the authorities of Pristina and those of Belgrade must be strengthened; Mr. Steiner spoke of this. They must focus on practical issues that can improve the daily life of Kosovars and can thus create the climate for a lasting solution to the problem. We also welcome the results achieved in dialogue between the Belgrade authorities and UNMIK.

Bulgaria wholeheartedly supports the efforts of the Special Representative to combat organized crime and trafficking in human beings and to assist Kosovo in relaunching its economy. As Mr. Steiner said a short while ago, what is of interest to Kosovars is the improvement of their daily life. That is where the international community is needed, and that is where the success or failure of the efforts of the Security Council and of the international community will be able to be measured. In that connection, my country believes that Kosovo has not yet reached a level of economic and social development, nor political development, that would enable it to address the problem of definitive status within an immediate time frame. In that context, the presence of UNMIK and KFOR in Kosovo continues to be a key factor for stability and a guarantee of peace and stability.

Bulgaria will continue to participate in the peacekeeping operations in Kosovo and to work within the regional framework so that this problem can be addressed with the utmost care. In 2003, even more attention should be focused on dealing with problems related to the shadow economy, organized crime and corruption.

I should also mention the importance that my country attaches to the regional aspects of the Kosovar question, which is of paramount importance for the countries of the region. Bulgaria would like to reaffirm its position that the implementation of regional infrastructure projects — in particular in the fields of telecommunications and transportation — is the genuine answer, not only to the problems of Kosovo but also to those of the entire region.

Mr. Aguilar Zinser (Mexico) (*spoke in Spanish*): At the outset, I wish to thank the Secretary-General for the report on the United Nations Interim Administration Mission in Kosovo (UNMIK) and, of course, most especially to thank the Special Representative of the Secretary-General, Mr. Michael Steiner, for his presence here and for his very timely and precise briefing on the situation on the ground.

I wish to relate my comments chiefly to the report of the Secretary-General (S/2003/113), and to do so using the Security Council mission to Kosovo and Belgrade last December as a viewpoint. In that respect, I associate myself with other delegations in thanking Ambassador Kolby of Norway, then a Council member, for organizing and heading that mission very successfully.

My delegation notes with great satisfaction the objectives that Mr. Steiner has outlined as central elements of his effort and of his task in Kosovo: job creation, the establishment of full security conditions and, of course, the forging of a multi-ethnic society.

In that regard, and with respect to the tasks carried out by the United Nations in Kosovo, there have undoubtedly been advances that we cannot overlook, advances in the implementation of resolution 1244 (1999). Noteworthy among those are the electoral processes of November 2001 and of October 2002, as well as the establishment of the Provisional Institutions of Self-Government and of the new Municipal Assemblies, all of which constitute exercises in democracy and form the basis of a new political maturity in that society, which has experienced such intense violence.

The process of transfer of responsibility to local institutions is an encouraging element of development, as is the expansion of UNMIK's authority to northern Mitrovica and the appointment of judges and prosecutors belonging to minority groups as part of Kosovo's judicial system. These latter developments have resulted from dialogue with the authorities of Yugoslavia, now Serbia and Montenegro.

The rule of law is a fundamental component for attaining stability, security and economic development in Kosovo. That is why my delegation welcomes the achievements in that sphere, such as last year's reduction in crime rates and the measures adopted by the Kosovo Police Service and the judicial system to make themselves multi-ethnic institutions with trained personnel.

However, we are deeply concerned at the violent incidents that have recently occurred within the Albanian-Kosovar community, apparently for political reasons, and, of course, at the aggression directed against minority communities — particularly the Serb minority — which are serious obstacles to the establishment of the rule of law. In this respect, we believe that the messages rejecting political crime, issued by Kosovar leaders, and the popular demonstrations in that regard are positive factors towards creating this new attitude and a new society. We urge those leaders to repudiate violence against minorities with the same vigour.

The sustainable return of refugees and displaced persons, minorities in particular, to their communities of origin is a fundamental precondition for achieving inter-community reconciliation, as is resolving the question of the fate of the missing persons. In this regard, we see with particular concern that minorities continue to face grave threats to their safety and security and that this situation, along with the consequent lack of freedom of movement, restricts their access to social services and economic opportunity, as quite rightly pointed out in the position paper published by the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees in January.

The maintenance or creation of parallel structures does not contribute to reconciliation; indeed, it militates against it, as do the initiatives designed to hasten the definition of Kosovo's status. The active

participation of representatives of minorities at all levels of public administration is among the objectives of the concept of standards before status. While it is important for minorities to benefit from the scope for political and public participation provided by UNMIK, and while it is the responsibility of their representatives to promote such participation, it is also true that, so long as a climate of security and tolerance does not exist, such participation will continue to be limited. It is the responsibility of the Albanian majority and its leaders to create such conditions. That is our view, shared by the Council's mission during its visit to Kosovo.

As far as cooperation between Belgrade and Pristina is concerned, my delegation supports the Secretary-General's appeal to the leaders of the Provisional Institutions of Self-Government in Kosovo to agree to embark on direct dialogue with Belgrade, as well as his request to the federal and Serbian authorities to do their utmost to promote such dialogue.

Along with other delegations, mine supports the concept of standards before status, since we believe that it is the only way for Kosovo to become a democratic and multi-ethnic society. It is important, however, for Kosovar society and its political leaders fully to embrace that concept and its parameters as their own and not as a process imposed from outside.

The United Nations is in Kosovo with the mission of achieving the vision of multi-ethnicity. Many obstacles to achieving that purpose and vision arise on a daily basis. The United Nations must pursue its work in Kosovo with this prospect in mind. The international community must help Kosovar society to live in peace as a multi-ethnic society. That, in the final analysis, is the aspiration of Kosovars and the aim of the international community.

Mr. Valdés (Chile) (*spoke in Spanish*): Allow me first of all to congratulate you, Sir, on convening this open debate of the Security Council on the situation in Kosovo. In the face of the great challenges ahead in 2003 and one year after the start of the gradual transfer of executive and legislative authority to the Kosovars, it seems highly appropriate that the Members of the United Nations should be able to express their views on the progress of the largest peace-building undertaking in the history of the United Nations.

We are also grateful for the briefing given by Mr. Michael Steiner, the Special Representative of the Secretary-General for Kosovo, whose efforts we fully appreciate. We also note with satisfaction the outcome of the Security Council mission to Kosovo and Belgrade that took place late last year.

As this is the first time that Chile is speaking on this item in the Council, we wish to express our support for the work of and results achieved by the United Nations Interim Administration Mission in Kosovo (UNMIK), in which our country is honoured to participate. We commend the personnel of UNMIK for their efforts in fulfilling their mandate to equip Kosovo, Serbia and Montenegro, with an interim administration under which its people can enjoy substantial self-government.

That is why we regard resolution 1244 (1999) as a valid basis and instrument for achieving the three-fold objective of its mandate: to administer Kosovo, to create institutions and, lastly, to facilitate a political process for determining the final status of Kosovo. With regard to the latter, we, like preceding speakers, endorse the standards before status approach and the eight standards elaborated by Mr. Michael Steiner, Special Representative of the Secretary-General.

With respect to the report of the Secretary-General, we recognize the significant progress made in 2002, inter alia, in the transfer of executive and legislative authority to the Provisional Institutions of Self-Government of Kosovo; the establishment of municipal Governments; the administration of justice, particularly the appointment of judges and prosecutors from minority communities; the establishment of a multi-ethnic civil service; and the extension of UNMIK to Mitrovica. Special mention should be made of the recent return of Kosovo Serb representatives to the Kosovo Assembly. That is a good sign.

However, we remain concerned about the situation of internally displaced persons and refugees. We hope that favourable conditions will continue to be created for their return in significant in numbers and in a sustainable manner with a view to the creation of a multi-ethnic and democratic society capable of reintegrating all the people of Kosovo, without exclusion.

We also note with alarm the incidents of violence, both among Kosovo Albanians and towards Kosovo Serbs. Every effort should be made to prevent an increase in arson, grievous assault and organized crime.

The actions of extremists and terrorists must be unanimously condemned.

We agree with the three challenges outlined by Mr. Michael Steiner on 20 January. It is essential, first, to strengthen the economy, particularly in the area of unemployment; to combat organized crime; and, lastly, to build a multi-ethnic society. We call upon the Government of Kosovo to cooperate with UNMIK in meeting these challenges.

With respect to the fight against organized crime, no progress in that regard is possible without the commitment of all actors to ensuring that the rule of law prevails and to improving the administration of justice for all, particularly for displaced persons and refugees. Moreover, respect for the rule of law and a strengthened judicial system are the best guarantee for preventing violations of human rights in Kosovo. In this context, it is vital for the parties fully to cooperate with the International Criminal Tribunal for the Former Yugoslavia.

With regard to the institutional aspect, we are aware that 2003 has ushered in a new phase whose main challenge will be to demonstrate the effectiveness of the Provisional Institutions of Self-Government, created to ensure the effective transfer of authority. A decisive test will be the way in which Kosovo civil servants discharge their functions when the number of international civil servants present today in Kosovo has been reduced by half.

In conclusion, we call upon the parties to intensify the constructive dialogue between Belgrade and Pristina with a view to achieving real, tangible results aimed at overcoming the serious challenges to which I have referred and, above all, at ensuring that all the inhabitants of Kosovo can live in their homeland with dignity and free from danger.

Mr. Gaspar Martins (Angola): I would like to start by welcoming the presence, at the beginning of the meeting, of the Secretary-General. I know that he had to leave to attend to other business. I welcome in particular the presence of Mr. Michael Steiner, the Special Representative, and the report that he introduced this morning (S/2003/113).

We welcome the recent developments, as presented in the report before us this morning, and we note that the situation has improved considerably since the adoption of resolution 1244 (1999), which created the United Nations Interim Administration Mission in Kosovo. The implementation of the resolution has been satisfactory, judging from the report before us this morning.

It is very important for a political settlement to be reached, and we think that the proposals contained in the relevant resolutions and the efforts of the international community, including, in particular, the recent Security Council mission to the region, are very encouraging. My delegation believes that the international community has a very important role to play in this process. But the primary responsibility for resolving the conflict lies with the parties.

The process of negotiation aimed at a lasting political settlement that is acceptable to all parties will require concessions, and we therefore encourage the parties to spare no effort to reduce the mistrust and to reach out to each other. We also encourage continued dialogue between the authorities in Belgrade and in Pristina; that is important for bringing about the consolidation of a more stable situation in the Balkans.

My delegation urges the parties to abide by the principle of "standards before status" and other recommendations in order to improve security in the region and in the country. We also welcome the three priorities for 2003 which were presented by Mr. Michael Steiner this morning. We feel that progress in that area will bring closer the successful conclusion of the Mission — one of our Organization's most effective missions.

Mr. Zhang Yishan (China) (*spoke in Chinese*): The Chinese delegation would like to thank the Secretary-General for his detailed report (S/2003/113). We also welcome the presence of Mr. Steiner at our meeting today, and we thank him for his statement.

At the end of last year, the Security Council mission, led by Ambassador Kolby of Norway, made a successful visit to Belgrade and Kosovo. We express our appreciation to Mr. Steiner, as well as to a number of other parties, for their efforts, which made the Security Council mission a success. The visit was very helpful in enabling the Security Council to make a comprehensive and objective assessment of the situation in Kosovo.

It should be recognized that a great deal of progress has been made in many fields in Kosovo. Municipal elections were carried out successfully, and

Provisional Institutions and municipal structures at various levels are functioning smoothly. We believe that that is the result of the joint efforts of various parties in Kosovo and the United Nations Interim Administration Mission in Kosovo (UNMIK), and we express our appreciation for those efforts.

At the same time, as Mr. Steiner pointed out, the international community and the various parties still have a great deal of work to do before a number of benchmarks can be met in the establishment of a harmonious and multi-ethnic society in Kosovo. We hope that the local leadership of Kosovo will effectively carry out its responsibilities and fully respect the mandate of UNMIK, establishing a stable regime and cooperating with UNMIK and the Government of Serbia and Montenegro so as to jointly promote the establishment of the rule of law, facilitate the process of refugee return, guarantee the interests of minorities — especially their safety, security and freedom of movement — effectively crack down on organized crime and bring about economic development and national integration.

The Chinese delegation is particularly disturbed about recent comments regarding independence for Kosovo. We believe that resolution 1244 (1999) remains the basis for the final status of Kosovo. Any attempt to redefine the borders will seriously damage the security and stability of the region. We support UNMIK's strict and fair implementation of its mandate. We call upon the parties concerned to continue their cooperation with UNMIK in implementing the provisions of resolution 1244 (1999) in a comprehensive and thorough manner with a view to ensuring the long-term stability and security of Kosovo and the of region as a whole.

Mr. Mekdad (Syrian Arab Republic) (*spoke in Arabic*): My delegation would like to begin by thanking you, Mr. President, for having convened this meeting on the situation in Kosovo. My delegation would also like wholeheartedly to thank Mr. Steiner, the Special Representative of the Secretary-General for Kosovo, for his complete and detailed briefing on recent developments there. We thank him in particular for his accurate summary of the situation in the province as presented in the six-page handout that has been distributed to us. We agree with his analysis of the situation and his emphasis on the need for social integration in Kosovo with a view to enabling the people there to move towards a future in which they can all actively and positively contribute to building the province.

My delegation would once again like to thank the Norwegian delegation, and Mr. Kolby in particular, for the efforts made last year, including during the Security Council mission to Kosovo.

My delegation would like also to welcome the report of the Secretary-General (S/2003/113) submitted pursuant to Security Council resolution 1244 (1999). My delegation commends the efforts made by the United Nations Interim Administration Mission in Kosovo (UNMIK) to change the political dynamics in that country, to provide incentives to eliminate parallel structures and to encourage all communities to participate in common institutions.

The report of the Secretary-General notes the emergence of Kosovo's two Provisional Institutions of Self-Government: the Assembly and the Government. Ongoing efforts to establish a multi-ethnic civil service continue to be of importance, despite the emergence of obstacles pertaining to the limited number of minority candidates, security concerns and tension among various ethnic minorities. Like previous speakers, we are concerned about information regarding continuing attacks against religious sites. We call for a halt to all such acts, which are unacceptable regardless of the religious values, teachings or criteria involved.

My delegation would like to emphasize the importance of the principle outlined by Mr. Steiner, namely, "standards before status". That principle is at present of great importance in order to guarantee participation by all communities in the political life of Kosovo and to overcome ongoing ethnic differences prior to discussing Kosovo's future status. That message, which was in fact confirmed by the Security Council's mission to Kosovo last December, was one that we have stressed repeatedly to all the parties concerned.

My delegation welcomes the extension of UNMIK's authority throughout Kosovo. Last November, the Mission extended its presence to the northern part or Mitrovica, thanks to the agreement reached between the Mission and the then Federal Republic of Yugoslavia.

My delegation would like to stress the need to work within a regional context in order to reach a solution to the question of Kosovo. Nevertheless, we

encourage dialogue between Belgrade and UNMIK. We call for the strengthening of that dialogue, which in the past produced positive results that cannot be ignored.

We would also like to stress that there is still an urgent need for UNMIK's work to continue. There is also a need to enhance the Mission's role, so that it may lead Kosovo and its people to peace.

The positive political developments in Kosovo — including the debate on decentralization, the strengthening of the rule of law, the building of a well-functioning and sustainable police force and fighting organized and cross-border crimes — can all lead to greater stability in Kosovo and will ultimately pave the way for a favourable economic environment that will encourage investment and economic and financial growth. That will in turn positively affect the return of displaced persons and refugees to their homes and property, thereby making it possible for them to contribute to building the future of Kosovo.

In conclusion, my delegation hails the efforts of Mr. Steiner and UNMIK to bring about peace and stability in the province. Building the Kosovo of the future will be impossible unless the memories, pain and suffering of the past are set aside and we focus on a future that includes the integration of all Kosovars regardless of their ethnic and religious background. It is through that integration that the people of Kosovo will guarantee peace and progress for future generations.

Mr. Akram (Pakistan): Allow me to begin by thanking Mr. Michael Steiner, the Secretary-General's Special Representative for Kosovo, for his briefing.

Pakistan attaches great importance to the work of the United Nations Interim Administration Mission in Kosovo (UNMIK). We support UNMIK's five pillars, as well as the eight standards that serve as the yardstick for measuring Kosovo's progress in self-governance. We believe that those standards will help in the implementation of the provisions of Security Council resolution 1244 (1999). They will also enable all the people of Kosovo to realize their fundamental rights in an environment of freedom, peace and the prospect of prosperity.

Given Kosovo's unique situation, we support Mr. Steiner's "standards before status" approach. This is, of course, a unique approach. We urge the people of Kosovo to work, with the assistance of the United Nations, to make those standards a reality on the ground. They should take ownership of all aspects of their own administration. Once that is done, we should — and I hope we will — move to the next phase of the implementation of resolution 1244 (1999), which, under paragraph 11 (e) of the resolution, is the process designed to determine Kosovo's final status. We hope that this process, when it takes place, will be based on consultations with all concerned, particularly the people of Kosovo, and that it will ensure their fundamental rights, consistent with the Charter of the United Nations.

Pakistan would like to add its voice in support of the direct dialogue between Pristina and Belgrade on administrative and practical issues, which has helped, in some measure, to improve cooperation and reduce tension in the region. We hope that similar progress can be made within Kosovo as well.

We share the concern expressed by the Secretary-General in an earlier report, that "Security remains a paramount concern" (*S/2002/62, para. 43*). We support calls, including by the Secretary-General, for the communities in Kosovo to reject violence and extremism and to move to genuine dialogue and reconciliation. The rule of law is central to progress being made towards reconciliation and, indeed, towards the path of self-governance. As Lord Ashdown recently said about post-conflict situations, "Only if you establish the rule of law can you have decent democratic practices" (*S/PV.4631, p. 27*).

Pakistan supports inter-ethnic conciliation and cooperation and the creation and maintenance of institutions consistent with resolution 1244 (1999). We call for the return, in dignity and safety, of all refugees and internally displaced persons, and for the protection of all minorities and their rights in each region of Kosovo.

In spite of the obstacles, we appreciate the progress that has been made by the United Nations, especially the efforts being made by Mr. Steiner and UNMIK to improve conditions in Kosovo. We acknowledge their efforts to promote peace in Kosovo based on multi-ethnic accommodation and the rule of law. We hope to see a Kosovo at peace with itself and all adjacent nations. We hope that Kosovo can emerge as a beacon of hope for peace in the entire region, a region that has seen so much despair during the last decade.

Mr. Williamson (United States of America): The United States thanks Special Representative Steiner for briefing us today, and we welcome the latest report of the Secretary-General on the United Nations Interim Administration Mission in Kosovo (UNMIK) (S/2003/113). Also, I would like to thank Mr. Steiner for inviting the Security Council last fall to send a mission to Kosovo in December and for the good work of Mr. Steiner and his UNMIK colleagues in developing a programme for the Council that proved to be very informative and useful.

The United States continues to be committed to UNMIK. We thank UNMIK for its good work. However, the United States has some concerns, including reports of parallel institutions. Such parallel institutions will be an impediment, not a benefit, to the future of Kosovo. Parallel institutions will be a roadblock to reconciliation.

We share with others in the Security Council a vision of an integrated multi-ethnic society in Kosovo where quality education is available to all, where people of all ethnicities are safe and have confidence in a fair, professional judicial system, where the economy is growing and creating jobs and opportunity and where the people are empowered to run their own affairs.

We wish to call the attention of the Security Council to certain elements of the Secretary-General's report that we believe are of particular importance, and also to express our views on the current situation in Kosovo.

The United States agrees that the Provisional Institutions of Self-Government must do much more to use authority already transferred under the Constitutional Framework. The authorities are significant, and the international community needs to continue to stress the importance of this. We believe that the Provisional Institutions of Self-Government should resist the domestic political pressures that cause them to blame UNMIK for their own inability to use their new authorities effectively.

The United States also is concerned with infighting among the Albanian parties. This is a growing problem, and it has a negative impact on the prospects for passage of critically needed legislation, on the economy, and elsewhere. The Security Council should make clear to all parties that they need to work together.

Regarding UNMIK's transfer of authority in Kosovo, when Mr. Steiner was appointed Special Representative of the Secretary-General, he put forward a plan outlining eight goals or standards and a series of benchmarks to gauge progress towards meeting these standards. The United States Government joined the international community in stressing "standards before status", asking the Kosovars to focus their energies on achieving the Special Representative's benchmarks for sustainable democratic self-government rather than on discussions of final political states. Standards include the establishment of functioning democratic institutions, rule of law, and returns and reintegration of minorities and others who have been displaced.

Because we believe that these standards, if implemented, would establish a sound foundation for a functioning multi-ethnic Kosovo, we continue to encourage Special Representative Steiner to develop a detailed work plan to guide the Provisional Institutions of Self-Government through the benchmarks process. We are concerned by the Secretary-General's report that some Kosovo Albanian cabinet members have publicly distanced themselves from the benchmarks.

The United States believes that UNMIK has been too reluctant to transfer authorities not reserved for the Special Representative of the Secretary-General under Security Council resolution 1244 (1999) and the Constitutional Framework. For example, the United States expended a great deal of energy and political capital in order to persuade UNMIK to agree in December to fold UNMIK's central fiscal authority into the Provisional Institutions of Self-Government Ministry of Finance and Economy. Unfortunately, individual UNMIK advisers at the Provisional Institutions of Self-Government at municipal levels appear to have been unwilling to cede real decision-making authority in this area.

The United States welcomed Mr. Steiner's 20 January television address in which he articulated his desire, as reflected in the upcoming presidential statement, to hand over all competencies he legally can to the Provisional Institutions by the end of this year on the condition that they are prepared to work seriously. We commend Mr. Steiner's intention to develop a joint plan with Prime Minister Rexhepi to work out how this can be accomplished smoothly and effectively. Our understanding is that UNMIK will turn over a specific number of powers on a monthly basis through the end

of the year. Such a transfer is extremely important. The elected leaders in Kosovo must accept responsibility for implementing the reforms necessary for a multi-ethnic society to flourish.

We invite Mr. Steiner to clarify whether this understanding is correct. Where are we on developing and implementing an operational plan for standards? Should financial aid be tied to conditionalities such as performance on areas of education and health?

We believe that it is important for UNMIK to work well with the Provisional Institutions, just as it is for those Institutions to cooperate fully with UNMIK. The United States continues to fully support "standards before status", and we look forward to the Special Representative's detailed worked plan for implementing the related benchmarks for the standards. This plan represents a major step forward in further defining for the Provisional Institutions more completely what it is they need to accomplish in the exercise of their authority to create a multi-ethnic civil society with a functioning economy.

We continue to find unhelpful all efforts to push forward on final status. We have supported talks between Belgrade and Pristina on technical issues. Therefore, we welcome Special Representative Steiner's ideas for more talks on technical issues between Belgrade and Pristina. In fact, this has already happened on environmental issues related to contamination of the Ibar River. We support further efforts in this regard, as long as UNMIK is careful to manage the process carefully.

We believe that it is premature for Belgrade to return any military or paramilitary presence to Kosovo. The inter-ethnic situation continues to be very tense, and such a development would be provocative and unhelpful. We understand that the command of KFOR is reviewing ways to enhance its efforts to provide security at monasteries and other Serb cultural sites in the north of Kosovo. We also have taken note of the letter from Deputy Prime Minister Jovic. We believe his claims reflect a certain frustration with the difficult challenge of making progress in Mitrovica. UNMIK is moving forward appropriately on this front, and we look forward to more details on the decentralization plan being worked out with the assistance of the Council of Europe.

In the meantime, we urge Belgrade to play a constructive role and comply with its own obligations. More needs to be done to recognize UNMIK licence plates and other documents as a way of helping Serbs reintegrate in Kosovo.

The United States is concerned by reports of rising acts of violence in Kosovo. We are especially concerned about the cases of violence against minority communities. There can be no environment of impunity in Kosovo. We are concerned about reports of renewed tension among the Kosovo Albanian coalition partners. We are especially concerned also by the Secretary-General's report that the Assembly continued to show reluctance to accommodate minority community demands.

While the Kosovo economy has improved, it is still quite anaemic and needs help. There are too few opportunities for the people of Kosovo.

In Kosovo, therefore, there is a great deal of work ahead. At the same time, with the successful elections, including at the municipal level; with a growing, well-trained professional police force; and with improved freedom of movement and progress elsewhere, there is cause for appreciation for the contribution that Special Representative Steiner and UNMIK are making in Kosovo.

As I said at the outset of my intervention, the United States thanks Special Representative Steiner and UNMIK for their good work and reiterates our strong support for UNMIK in its mission.

Mr. Gatilov (Russian Federation) (*spoke in Russian*): We would like to express our gratitude to the Secretary-General for his report on the activities of the United Nations Interim Administration Mission in Kosovo (UNMIK) in Kosovo and also to the head of the Mission, Mr. Steiner, for his substantive briefing on the situation in the region.

The assessments and analyses contained therein, in addition to the observations and conclusions of the most recent Security Council mission to Kosovo and Belgrade, provide a good basis for a comprehensive consideration of the situation in the region and around it and allow us to summarize the first year of Mr. Steiner's activities as Special Representative of the Secretary-General for Kosovo.

We agree that today we can note with satisfaction progress in the implementation of Security Council resolution 1244 (1999) and the normalization of life in Kosovo, which have been advanced by, inter alia, the

efforts of the Special Representative of the Secretary-General, Mr. Steiner, and by his putting forward the concept of "standards before status".

In the region, the Provisional Institutions of Self-Government have begun their work and have begun the transfer to them of some of the competencies of the Special Representative. The second round of municipal elections has taken place. Gradually the new Kosovo police forces are coming into their own. Progress has been noted in the resolution of economic and social issues and in the establishment of dialogue with the leadership of the Serbian Return Coalition and the Government in Belgrade; a clear result of this was a solution to the problem of northern Mitrovica.

We note in this context that the situation in the region remains extremely sensitive. It is important that the international presences there act with the utmost sense of responsibility, avoiding incautious actions that could hamper progress towards the goals set.

We welcome the readiness of the Belgrade leadership to continue constructive cooperation with the United Nations Interim Administration Mission in Kosovo and also with Pristina.

This is key to a solution to many of the problems that are hindering the full implementation of resolution 1244 (1999). All of these problems are well known and will continue to require unflagging attention on the part of the international community. These include the absence of conditions ensuring equal security and freedom of movement for all of the inhabitants of Kosovo, first and foremost of the Serbian minority, and the continuing wave of violence against the Serbs who have remained in the region.

A highly disquieting new factor is the outburst of violence — clearly politically motivated, moreover — within the Kosovo Albanian community as well.

The optimistic figures as to the numbers of minority refugees who have returned, which have exceeded the outflow indicators, do not, in our view, fully reflect the real state of affairs, since, in a number of regions of Kosovo where the Serbs were living at the time of the deployment of the United Nations Mission in Kosovo and KFOR, today practically none of them are left.

Also a source of serious concern today is the continuation of the Kosovo Protection Corps as a paramilitary organization — an heir to the KLA. Moreover, we fail to understand the position of the international presences, which have virtually reconciled themselves to the Corps's status. As a result, the Corps retains many characteristics of a paramilitary structure, including personal side-arm weapons for the commanding officers, the rank of generals and so on. In addition, the number of Corps personnel has not been reduced. The maintenance of the Kosovo Protection Corps in such a form is a potential source of destabilization in the region and could trigger a new wave of inter-ethnic violence.

Particularly disquieting for us are the unceasing attempts of the leaders of the Kosovo Albanians to harp on the subject of independence. Very recently they once again issued a challenge to the international community, putting forward in the regional Assembly a draft declaration on the independence of Kosovo, which contravenes both resolution 1244 (1999) and the Constitutional Framework on Provisional Self-Government in the region.

Some leaders of the Kosovo Albanians have even made statements to the effect that the international presences allegedly are abusing the hospitality rendered them, and are speaking in favour of their withdrawal. Demands are also being made, despite resolution 1244 (1999), for the speeding up of the transfer of all competencies of the Special Representative of the Secretary-General to the Provisional Institutions of Self-Government. This is taking place in conditions where, as indicated in the report of the Secretary-General, the Kosovo Albanian majority continues to shirk its responsibility for the development of the situation in the region. This above all affects the creation of dignified living conditions in the region for all of its inhabitants, regardless of their ethnic background. It is clear they are not doing enough to involve ethnic minorities in the activities of regional bodies of self-government at all levels.

We continue to see that, despite statements regarding dedication to multi-ethnicity, the regional institutions of self-government in fact very often ignore the interests of the minorities. We believe that UNMIK and its head, Mr. Steiner, regarding this issue, will continue to take a consistent position to prevent attempts by Albanian extremists to make use of the Provisional Institutions of Self-Government to achieve their political goals and the transformation of Kosovo into an independent, quasi-State entity.

We are also convinced that the United Nations Mission must continue actively to work to affirm legality in the region, as is required by resolution 1244 (1999). Attempts by the Kosovo institutions of self-government to cast doubt on the actions of UNMIK are inadmissible.

The Security Council must clearly reaffirm the unfailing dedication of the international community to the strict implementation of resolution 1244 (1999), including that part which deals with the reaffirmation of the sovereignty and territorial integrity of the new State of Serbia and Montenegro, as a successor to the Federal Republic of Yugoslavia.

We also believe that there is a need to create a favourable dynamic in the development of the situation in the Balkans. Here we include constructive dialogue with Serbia and Montenegro, gradual movement towards a settlement in Macedonia, the further normalization of relations between Belgrade and Zagreb and other processes. Viewed on a broader level, we believe that all of this confirms the relevance of the Russian initiative to establish a legal basis for stability in the Balkans through the conclusion by the countries of the region of legally binding agreements on mutual respect for sovereignty and territorial integrity and on the inviolability of borders, all with appropriate international guarantees. The implementation of such an approach would favour the achievement of a comprehensive settlement in Kosovo in accordance with resolution 1244 (1999).

Mr. Tidjani (Cameroon) (*spoke in French*): My delegation thanks the Secretary-General for his highly detailed report (S/2003/113) on the situation in Kosovo. We also welcome the presence among us of the Special Representative of the Secretary-General, Mr. Steiner, whose determination and professionalism on the ground inspire our admiration.

The management of the issue of Kosovo by the international community in general and by the United Nations in particular continues to create hope and expectations that the region will be rid of its old demons of war, violence and hatred so that peace, security, stability, tolerance and reconciliation can finally prevail. In our view, those are the only elements that can engender a climate of trust between the parties and that can restore the conditions for a better life and for socio-economic growth beneficial to all. Those elements also create expectations of full cooperation by the parties concerned in the implementation of measures formulated to achieve our shared goals.

From 13 to 17 December 2002, the Security Council visited Kosovo. Following that mission, there has been reason to ask whether our hopes and expectations, which I have just mentioned, were unrealistic. It is true that the action of the international community in this area has succeeded in preventing the worst. The deterrent operational presence of the United Nations Interim Administration Mission in Kosovo (UNMIK) and KFOR have established a certain degree of peace and security, which are indispensable for any political, social and humanitarian action in Kosovo.

Having made it possible to prevent a humanitarian tragedy, the highly commendable action of UNMIK has, on a daily basis, patiently been laying the foundations of a modern society and State of the rule of law in which peace, security and social harmony prevail. But the socio-political situation in Kosovo today is characterized by hatred, the rejection of the other, violence — even if latent — and the instinct for domination.

The picture presented of the situation in Kosovo reflects what my delegation saw during the Council's mission, and I am moved to make a few comments. The Security Council and the international community should focus their action not on the medium term but on the long term. They should also review their overall strategy and modalities aimed at achieving our objectives in order to give fresh impetus to our very approach to the question of Kosovo. That impetus requires a new vision leading the United Nations to be even more mindful of the people of Kosovo of all socio-political backgrounds and to further assimilate the complex socio-political realities of Kosovo.

In that regard, I welcome Mr. Steiner's comment in his briefing. He asked: what do the people of Kosovo want? He himself offered appropriate answers. We wish to support him with respect to the priorities he has set for 2003.

Secondly, we need to be mindful of the people of Kosovo, to offer concrete support for social and humanitarian action on the ground and, above all, to commit ourselves now to deep and unhurried reflection on the final status of Kosovo. The success or failure of the United Nations presence in Kosovo depends on the way in which the outcome of that reflection is shaped and negotiated.

Outstanding achievements of 2002 are summarized in paragraph 60 of the Secretary-General's report: the handing over of responsibilities from UNMIK to the Provisional Institutions of Self-Government, the extension of UNMIK's authority to northern Mitrovica, and the holding of municipal elections in October 2002. We have also seen the establishment of a stable and operational police force and a functioning local judiciary, increasingly reliable public transportation, regional cooperation to combat organized crime and dialogue with Belgrade. But, as the Secretary-General says, Kosovo still has a long way to go to achieve the benchmarks and targets set out in the benchmarks matrix.

Indeed, obstacles continue to exist on three levels: institutional, security and economic. Moreover, these constitute the priorities for 2003. First, with respect to institutions, in the civil service there are problems with human resources and difficulties in establishing a multi-ethnic civil service and in ensuring equitable representation of minority communities. With respect to the Assembly, there is deliberate confusion with respect to the competences that the Constitutional Framework grants to the Special Representative of the Secretary-General and to the Provisional Institutions of Self-Government. We also note the problem of the minorities and difficulties in working together in mixed municipal assemblies.

With respect to security, we note politically-motivated acts of violence, violence aimed at minority communities, acts of ethnic violence and the destruction of churches. All these problems seem to stem from the problem of the status of Kosovo. For further evidence, it suffices to turn to paragraphs 9 and 12 of the report of the Secretary-General.

Finally, with respect to the economic situation, development and stability are long-term processes requiring legal and socio-political preconditions, including the rule of law, peace and solidarity. These considerations call upon the international community to make an even greater commitment in Kosovo.

My delegation would like to express its appreciation to the United Nations, and to international humanitarian organizations and non-governmental organizations for their work on the ground. That work is particularly worthy. Its impact is immeasurable. We encourage them to persevere despite the many difficulties that they encounter. We reiterate our gratitude and encouragement to all those actors and to the members of UNMIK, who daily and tirelessly work in the field so that peace may finally prevail in Kosovo.

Mr. Traoré (Guinea) (*spoke in French*): My delegation welcomes the convening of this meeting on Kosovo and thanks the Secretary-General for his very detailed report (S/2003/113) and Mr. Steiner, Special Representative of the Secretary-General, for his briefing.

Concerned to ensure effective monitoring of the implementation of resolution 1244 (1999), the Secretary-General and the members of the Security Council successively carried out missions to Kosovo and Belgrade in November and December 2002, respectively. The Council's mission enabled us to assess the progress achieved and the challenges remaining, and to identify measures to be taken to deal with the situation on the ground. Our 4676th meeting, on 19 December 2002, was also very edifying with regard to those issues. The report that Mr. Steiner has just presented is part of the same dynamic.

While taking note of the successes achieved in the framework of the functioning of democratic institutions, my delegation encourages strengthening of cooperation between the United Nations Interim Administration Mission in Kosovo (UNMIK) and the Provisional Institutions of Self-Government, in strict respect for resolution 1244 (1999).

We welcome the extension of UNMIK's administration to northern Mitrovica and hail the Povratak coalition's decision to return to the Assembly. We urge the leaders of the majority and of the minorities to cooperate to a greater extent, taking into account the interests of all Kosovars.

We encourage the efforts under way in the area of decentralization, and once again we emphasize the need for the application of the benchmarks. We fully endorse the principle of "standards before status", which remains indisputable.

Moreover, we appreciate the measures under way in the areas of security and the judiciary, which have helped to improve the rule of law. However, efforts must be continued in the area of freedom of movement until a psychology of mutual acceptance among the various communities can be established.

The return of refugees and the restoration of property remain subjects of concern. My delegation

once again welcomes the setting up of a refugee task force and the actions undertaken with regard to the return of goods. We appeal to the international community, particularly the donor community, to contribute more to the implementation of UNMIK's 2003 strategy for the sustainable return of refugees.

In addition, we welcome the economic progress achieved in 2002. As we have always indicated, development programmes, in order to succeed, must take into account the interests of all components and all categories of the province, as well as the objectives of regional stabilization.

Moreover, it should be emphasized that the Kosovo Protection Corps should maintain its legal status in order to avoid any ambiguity. In that regard, my delegation encourages UNMIK and KFOR to continue their efforts.

In conclusion, we believe that the establishment of a lasting peace in Kosovo will be possible only through sustained commitment by the leaders, the civil servants, the civil society and the entire population of Kosovo in order to transcend differences and useless quarrels and to focus on the defence of common interests that will enable all to thrive.

Ms. Menendez (Spain) (*spoke in Spanish*): I shall be very brief, because Greece will shortly make a statement on behalf of the European Union that, of course, it will also be making on behalf of the Spanish delegation. I should like to make only three brief comments.

We thank Mr. Steiner for his comprehensive briefing. Resolution 1244 (1999) and the Constitutional Framework are the cornerstone of the action of the international community and that of the Security Council on the question of Kosovo, and thus the principle of "standards before status" remains valid.

We note from the report of the Secretary-General (S/2003/113) and from Mr. Steiner's briefing that the situation in Kosovo has been mixed. For example, there was improvement on the economic front in 2002, but at the same time there were structural problems, such as in job creation and investment, which remain problematic. In the security field there has been a general drop in crime, but recently there has also been an increase in violence with political overtones, which is disquieting. There has been some progress in the multi-ethnic area, but not as much as desired. We are also concerned about the issue of parallel institutions. Thus we see that there are a number of disquieting factors.

Our final comment is that we fully support the priorities indicated by Mr. Steiner for 2003, as well as the policy of the transfer of authorities, which he hopes will be carried out by year's end. We hope that such authorities will be responsibly assumed by those concerned.

The President: I shall now make a statement in my capacity as representative of Germany.

First of all, I should like to say that my delegation subscribes to the statement that Greece will make shortly on behalf of the European Union. Along with our partners in the European Union, we believe that the situation in Kosovo has come a long way since the adoption of resolution 1244 (1999). But, as we have heard this morning, much remains to be done.

I should like to thank Mr. Michael Steiner for his very detailed briefing this morning, which has brought us up to date. I should also like to commend Mr. Steiner and the whole team of the United Nations Interim Administration Mission in Kosovo (UNMIK) for their excellent work in Kosovo; we reiterate our full support for their efforts. We also support KFOR's excellent work on the ground and in the area of security. KFOR is fulfilling an essential task in that regard.

I should like to make a few points. First of all, we should like to welcome the extension of UNMIK authority to the northern part of Mitrovica, and we consider that a great and important step forward. Any attempt to undermine the authority of UNMIK or its integration efforts or to maintain parallel structures is in direct contravention of Security Council resolution 1244 (1999). There is no room for any form of co-governance, either in northern Mitrovica or anywhere else in Kosovo. The authority lies with UNMIK.

My second point is the following. We urge all parties in the region to fully respect resolution 1244 (1999). Any attempt to prejudge the final status of Kosovo now would be ill-timed and not helpful; such attempts would not be acceptable right now. We reject all attempts to prejudge the final status of Kosovo, whether they are aimed at declaring independence or at hastening a debate and a decision for which the time has not yet come. The international community must

stay the course. In his report, the Secretary-General was right: the principle of "standards before status" stands. Therefore, we strongly support Michael Steiner's concept.

We particularly welcome the explanations made by the Special Representative on the further way ahead in the implementation of the benchmarks. If we want to transfer by the end of this year the remaining authorities from UNMIK to the Provisional Institutions of Self-Government, and if we want to exclude the so-called reserved powers, then the benchmarks have to be met. To that end, both UNMIK and the Kosovar Institutions must join forces and make a major effort.

The implementation of the benchmarks is, however, a question not only of capability and efficiency, but also of good will. There are certain benchmarks that could be fulfilled immediately, such as the establishment of freedom of movement for the minorities. We strongly urge the Kosovo Albanians to demonstrate their commitment to the democratic, multi-ethnic future of Kosovo. Concrete action must be taken against the climate of ethnic hatred and revenge for the atrocities the Kosovo Albanian population has suffered. Instead, a climate of tolerance and mutual respect throughout all ethnic communities has to be created.

The answer to ethnic questions is not separation and division, but cooperation and integration. The development of a truly multi-ethnic society is a prerequisite for a successful future in Kosovo. It was towards the restoration of human rights and multi-ethnicity that made the international community intervene in Kosovo in 1999.

I would like to conclude by stressing the important role that KFOR plays as the guarantor of internal security and in assisting UNMIK in implementing its task. With regard to ongoing discussions of troop reductions in Kosovo, we should be aware of the implications of further reductions for the peace implementation process. We believe that close consultations with the Special Representative are needed to avoid possible security gaps.

I now resume my functions as President of the Security Council.

I now call on the representative of Serbia and Montenegro.

Mr. Šahović (Serbia and Montenegro): Allow me at the outset to congratulate you, Sir, on your assumption of the presidency of the Council for this month. We wish you every success in your extremely challenging task in February.

My delegation would like to express its appreciation for the visit of the Security Council mission to Kosovo and Belgrade last December, especially to Ambassador Kolby, the head of the mission. We consider it invaluable that the Council members had the opportunity to gain first-hand knowledge of the conditions on the ground. The report of the mission clearly demonstrates that so much still needs to be done in Kosovo and Metohija.

We also welcome the Secretary-General's report, which contains a comprehensive assessment of the overall situation in Kosovo, and we are grateful for his presence at this meeting. I wish to thank his Special Representative, Mr. Steiner, for his briefing.

I would like to take this opportunity to reiterate the importance of the recent adoption and promulgation of the Constitutional Charter of Serbia and Montenegro. The new Constitution will enable the country to stabilize and will contribute to the stability of the region as a whole. In this context, allow me to emphasize that the adoption of the Constitutional Charter does not change the identity or the international personality of the State. The international obligations and laws relevant to the Federal Republic of Yugoslavia, including resolution 1244 (1999), will continue to apply to Serbia and Montenegro.

We welcome the fact that the Security Council, in its presidential statement prepared for this meeting, expresses the same view, namely, that resolution 1244 (1999) remains fully valid in all its aspects in the context of the transformation of the Federal Republic of Yugoslavia into Serbia and Montenegro. We are firmly of the view that all United Nations documents should continue to reflect the fact that Kosovo and Metohija is a part of Serbia and Montenegro, in accordance with resolution 1244 (1999). Specifically, our position is that reference to Serbia and Montenegro should be inserted into United Nations documents whenever Kosovo is mentioned.

It is necessary to assess the extent to which resolution 1244 (1999) has been implemented. With due respect to significant efforts and gradual improvements in some segments, the reports of both

the Secretary-General and the Security Council mission, as well as recent reports by other international bodies, clearly indicate that, after almost four years of the international presence, the objective of a stable, multi-ethnic and prosperous Kosovo and Metohija is far from being achieved. There are still flagrant violations of human and minority rights. Violence, crime, intolerance, arms, drugs and trafficking in human beings are, unfortunately, abundant throughout the province.

Our primary concerns continue to be security, human and minority rights, the return of refugees and internally displaced persons, and resolving the fate of the missing. Decentralization, which has unfortunately not moved from the initial stages, is also of immense importance as a precondition for ensuring equal rights for all communities.

Within the context of security and minority rights, the issue of protecting cultural and historical heritage and religious sites must be addressed. Regrettably, the efforts of KFOR and the United Nations Interim Administration Mission in Kosovo (UNMIK) have been insufficient, as has been evident from the destruction of more than 100 patrimonial sites in Kosovo and Metohija in the past few years.

The Secretary-General's report has noted the obstacles to the establishment of a multi-ethnic civil service, which include security concerns and the lack of freedom of movement. The report concludes that violence against the Kosovo Serb community has been widely condemned by the international community, while the reaction of the Kosovo leadership has been rather low-key.

One of the goals of resolution 1244 (1999) is the establishment of substantial autonomy in Kosovo and Metohija. However, many developments on the ground undoubtedly go well beyond the scope of autonomy. Some of the decisions by UNMIK have contributed to this situation. Also, there have been major attempts by the Provisional Institutions of Self-Government to overstep their authority, established in the Constitutional Framework.

The Secretary-General's report concludes that Government meetings and Assembly sessions are characterized by an increasing desire to encroach on the powers reserved to the Special Representative of the Secretary-General, while the Assembly has shown continued reluctance to accommodate minority community demands. The report notes several new year messages from leading Kosovo Albanian politicians calling for independence in 2003.

The latest example of this pattern of behaviour is a proposal by a number of Albanian deputies of the Kosovo Assembly to adopt a declaration of independence for the province. While recognizing the freedom of political expression, we do believe that it is essential to abide by international law and relevant documents, which are binding for all. We therefore urge the Security Council to respond decisively to the aforementioned initiative, as it is not only contrary to resolution 1244 (1999), but also poses a threat to regional stability. Otherwise, this trend towards creeping independence will continue — a trend that motivates the calls to begin discussions on the future of Kosovo and Metohija, and to begin such discussions "before it is too late" and while there is still something to discuss.

Time and again, we have stressed the importance of initiating a dialogue between Belgrade and Pristina. For our part, we are ready to engage in this process. However, our calls to that effect have gone unanswered. We have to rebuild ties between the various parts of the country if we want to leave the tragic legacy of the past behind. Also, we firmly believe that our cooperation with UNMIK is a key to the successful implementation of resolution 1244 (1999). The cooperation needs to be further intensified and improved, which implies that all our agreements and understandings should be honoured. Mutual trust is a sine qua non for this cooperation. In that sense, the arrangements for northern Mitrovica are especially important and have to be fully implemented to enable us to move forward.

The benchmarks of the Special Representative of the Secretary-General are an important aspect of the efforts to normalize Kosovo and Metohija. However, we strongly believe that the Security Council should remain focused on resolution 1244 (1999) as the basic, legally binding document on Kosovo and Metohija. Unfortunately, it is obvious that a number of important provisions of the resolution have not been implemented yet. We therefore reiterate the need for its full implementation, including paragraph 9.

My country fully shares the view of the Security Council mission that continued substantial international engagement in Kosovo will be necessary

in the foreseeable future. The fact that only 2 per cent of internally displaced persons have been able to return to Kosovo and Metohija so far is the best proof that the current level of international security presence should be maintained.

We are relying on the Security Council to continue to address all of those problems and to actively monitor the events in Kosovo and Metohija. It is of particular importance that the Council continue to act in a resolute and comprehensive manner, in line with its authority under resolution 1244 (1999), taking into account the interests of all parties concerned. No party should be excluded from that process. Short of that, it is difficult to expect any substantive improvement in the situation in Kosovo and Metohija.

The President: The next speaker inscribed on my list is the representative of Greece. I invite him to take a seat at the Council table and to make his statement.

Mr. Vassilakis (Greece): I should like first to congratulate you, Mr. President, on your assumption of your new duties and to offer you my best wishes.

I have the honour to speak on behalf of the European Union (EU). The acceding countries Cyprus, the Czech Republic, Estonia, Hungary, Latvia, Lithuania, Malta, Poland, Slovakia and Slovenia, the associated countries Bulgaria, Romania and Turkey and the European Free Trade Association country member of the European Economic Area Iceland align themselves with this statement.

We welcome the participation in today's meeting of the Secretary-General's Special Representative, Mr. Steiner, and we thank him for his statement.

We would also like to express our appreciation to Ambassador Kolby of Norway for his comprehensive report on the Security Council mission to Kosovo (S/2002/1376), which took place towards the end of last year. For the European Union, it is reassuring to know that the Security Council is continuing to closely follow the situation there and is still interested in and very much committed to safeguarding its stability and monitoring its development. It is only with the active involvement and continuous help of the international community that the area will manage to deal with its many and pressing problems.

There is no doubt that the situation in Kosovo has moved forward since the adoption of resolution 1244 (1999). Nevertheless, there is also no doubt that there is still a long way to go before the province achieves the goal of establishing stable and truly functioning multi-ethnic and multicultural democratic institutions which will allow full minority participation.

The full implementation of Security Council resolution 1244 (1999) remains the cornerstone of the EU's policy on Kosovo, and the "standards before status" policy provides the benchmarks which form the basis for Kosovo's future. Responsible self-administration and the consolidation of a climate of peaceful coexistence among the ethnic groups are of paramount importance in building a multi-ethnic and multicultural Kosovo.

Despite the settlement of 1.5 million refugees and internally displaced persons in South-East Europe, more than 1 million people still remain displaced. That constitutes a major humanitarian, social and political challenge for all of us. Achieving the genuine and sustainable reintegration of minority returnees is an indicator of political and democratic maturity, as well as of compliance with internationally accepted standards. A Kosovo in which members of minority communities are oppressed will face a bleak future of self-isolation. All regional actors must spare no effort in establishing the appropriate security and legislative conditions which will make the returns feasible and in allocating resources to ensure their sustainability and the inclusion of the returnees in the economic recovery process. Efforts should also focus on the real issues facing the province: economic development, tackling unemployment, attracting foreign job-creating investment, privatization, education, health and the fight against organized crime.

The EU supports the objectives of the Special Representative of the Secretary-General, Mr. Steiner, in tackling these challenges: laying the foundation for economic progress; establishing a political culture based on the rule of law, including the fight against organized crime and violence; and building a fair and just society with dignity for all. The EU calls on all parties to cooperate fully with the United Nations Interim Administration Mission in Kosovo (UNMIK) and KFOR in pursuing those objectives.

Organized crime in particular is a scourge for the region, threatening the very foundations of all our efforts there. It nourishes corruption and ethnic conflict, impedes the building and normal functioning of democratic institutions, the rule of law and the

market economy and finances illegal armed groups. Its elimination is of vital importance if any stability and development is to be achieved.

Respect for and the protection of cultural monuments and religious sites is another challenge that we have to deal with. The European Union unequivocally condemns all religious vandalism and supports all efforts aimed at preserving and restoring the cultural monuments and religious sites which are the common heritage of the peoples of the region, irrespective of their ethnic affiliation or religious beliefs.

We have repeatedly said in the past that United Nations authority throughout Kosovo is unconditional. There can be no mono-ethnicity and no parallel structures. We support UNMIK's intention to transfer further competences to the Provisional Institutions of Self-Government. With power comes responsibility, and responsibility means, among other things, compliance with international obligations, including cooperation with the International Criminal Tribunal for the Former Yugoslavia.

On 25 November 2002, UNMIK took over the north Mitrovica building that once housed the parallel municipal administration in an effort to dismantle the parallel structures which had been established there. The European Union welcomes the extension of direct administrative authority by UNMIK in northern Mitrovica as an important step towards the future normalization of the situation in Kosovo. It is a fine example of the positive impact that close cooperation between UNMIK and the authorities in Belgrade can have on handling the many issues facing the region. We welcome that cooperation and urge its further enhancement in the future. We also believe that the cooperation between Belgrade and the elected representatives of the people of Kosovo will be instrumental in creating conditions of security necessary for the stability and development of the whole region. All parties need to demonstrate that they can carry out their commitments within the existing framework. It is unacceptable for anyone to unilaterally decide Kosovo's status.

Having touched upon the areas for which benchmarks have been established, I would like to reiterate the European Union's strong commitment to the stabilization and association process for the western Balkans as the cornerstone of our relevant policy. Enriched with knowledge drawn from the recently completed enlargement process, the stabilization and association process, which is aimed at strengthening the accession-oriented dimension, explores ways to introduce the aim of economic and social cohesion into European Union policies and to assess priorities, eventually leading to European integration.

The President: The next speaker inscribed on my list is the representative of Norway. I invite him to take a seat at the Council table and to make his statement.

Mr. Strommen (Norway): Let me start by congratulating you, Sir, on your assumption of the presidency of the Security Council for the month of February.

Norway would like to thank Special Representative Steiner for his briefing and the report (S/2003/113) on the United Nations Interim Administration Mission in Kosovo (UNMIK) that has been presented to the Security Council. We would once again like to reiterate our full support for Mr. Steiner's work, and our appreciation for the efforts carried out by him, UNMIK and the Provisional Institutions of Self-Government in ensuring the implementation of Security Council resolution 1244 (1999).

At the 4676th meeting of the Council, held on 19 December last year, Ambassador Kolby presented the report on the Security Council delegation's visit to Kosovo and Belgrade. Please allow me to reiterate the most important findings of that mission.

The mission found notable progress in several areas as regards the implementation of Security Council resolution 1244 (1999). The elections held for the Kosovo Assembly in 2001 and for the municipalities in 2002 have led to the formation of Provisional Institutions of Self-Government and the new municipal assemblies. The process of handing over power and responsibility to local institutions continues.

There is also progress in the area of the rule of law. Crime rates are down and security is improving. The Kosovo Police Service continues to increase in numbers, and the judiciary is in the process of being established, both of them as multi-ethnic bodies.

However, despite that progress, many inadequacies remain, as detailed in the mission's report. Kosovo is still a long way from having truly functioning democratic institutions and a society where

minorities can fully participate. The situation remains fragile, and much work remains to be done, by UNMIK, the Kosovo institutions and local communities. That includes, in particular, the rule of law, combating organized crime, democratization, sustainable returns, inter-ethnic reconciliation and cooperation between Pristina and Belgrade.

As regards the latter, the reluctance of some Kosovo Albanian leaders to engage directly with Belgrade officials exemplifies an isolationist tendency that is unrealistic in both the regional and the European perspectives. The establishment of the rule of law is central to achieving security, a functioning democracy and sustainable economic development. As a majority, Kosovo Albanians must take responsibility for the security of members of minorities and their full access to public services. At the same time, members of minorities must integrate into Kosovar society. Parallel institutions have no future; integration is the only way forward.

Allow me to further elaborate on a few important issues also addressed in the presentation of the report. The formulation of benchmarks for the realization of standards is a constructive approach for Kosovo's further development into a democratic and multi-ethnic society. As reported, the progress achieved so far seems to have been driven, to a great extent, by the international community. Again, we would like to underline the importance of making yet greater efforts to involve local institutions and political leaders from all communities in the practical formulation and implementation of political goals and strategies.

The further specification and implementation of the benchmarks must therefore be worked out in cooperation with local authorities. UNMIK must go the extra mile in order to secure that local ownership. But so, too, must local political leaders. Words must become action. The apparent reluctance on the part of the Provisional Institutions of Self-Government to engage in that process is counter-productive and undermines the further democratization of Kosovo. A greater degree of local ownership of, and commitment to, the achievement of the benchmarks is a prerequisite for the ultimate successful implementation of European standards in Kosovo.

The communities themselves also have a very critical responsibility in that regard. Local politicians in both the Assembly and the municipal assemblies have repeatedly asked for more power and for an accelerated transfer of greater responsibility. The attitude of local political leaders in that regard raises certain questions. They demand greater power and responsibility, but are at the same time not able to deal adequately with the power and responsibility that are already within their mandate. We strongly urge local political leaders from all communities, as well as the Provisional Institutions of Self-Government, to make a strong effort to fulfil their existing mandates. Norway supports Special Representative Steiner's statement that more competences will be transferred, but on the condition that local institutions work more seriously.

The decentralization of municipal responsibilities is a very important process. We are pleased to note that UNMIK, together with the Council of Europe, has initiated a process to build local ownership for a decentralization strategy. Consultation and collaboration with political leaders representing a cross-section of the communities in Kosovo is of fundamental importance in that respect. Nothing imposed from the outside will be sustainable in the long run.

Despite an overall improvement in the area of law and order, we have witnessed some worrying events in Kosovo in the first month of this year. The rocket-propelled grenade attack on UNMIK police headquarters and the recent spate of murders and assaults in several places in Kosovo undermine efforts to build law and order and represent a serious challenge to the international community, and not least to the Provisional Institutions of Self-Government. This only underscores the tenuous state of the rule of law in Kosovo, and further highlights the importance of the benchmarks approach. We urge UNMIK and the Kosovo Police Service, as well as local political leaders, to do their utmost to strengthen the public's support and respect for law and order in Kosovo. While we note and appreciate the clear condemnations of violence by Prime Minister Rexhepi and certain municipal officials, the muted reaction of the majority of political leaders can only be described as both disappointing and unacceptable.

On the question of the final status of Kosovo, we have seen several initiatives lately, both from Belgrade and from Kosovo. Those initiatives are not helpful. They represent a distraction. They deflect attention from what we all should consider to be the main task at hand, namely, the realization of higher standards of

government and society for the benefit of all the inhabitants of Kosovo. That was the main message of the Security Council mission to Kosovo and Belgrade last December. All parties should now focus on the realization of Special Representative Steiner's "standards before status" approach.

The President: I now give the floor to Mr. Michael Steiner to respond to comments and questions raised.

Mr. Steiner: First of all, let me thank the Security Council as a body for its strong support for the policy we have proposed to it.

There were not many questions raised this time. I shall try briefly to address the ones that have been asked.

The Central Fiscal Authority (CFA) has been mentioned, as has the question of its merger into the Provisional Institutions. By the way, the CFA had been one of the most successful institutions of the United Nations Interim Administration Mission in Kosovo (UNMIK). Let me just say in this regard that, as of 1 January 2003, the Central Fiscal Authority does not exist any more. It has been merged into the Ministry of Finance. I think this is a major success. I believe we have done what could be done in that regard.

Secondly, I wish to address the question of conditionality, which is an important question not only in Kosovo but, very generally, as regards the engagement of the international community in various areas. I think that conditionality is unavoidable, and that we should pursue it. By the way, this is a policy that is exercised by the European Union with respect to the integration path of European countries. It is surely a path we too should follow in implementing the benchmarks in Kosovo.

I think the important point in this area is to think about negative and positive conditionalities. Another important point is that there is both a central level and a local level. When we talk about conditionality, we should also think specifically about the local level. Why? Because the return of refugees and multi-ethnicity take place at the local level in day-to-day life. What is very important when looking at the situation in Kosovo, I believe, is that one sees a very differentiated picture. There are communities that are quite successful as concerns respect for multi-ethnicity and the rights of minorities, as well as return efforts. There are others in which one can still hear noises from local representatives that are not very helpful and not in line with our common policy.

What we should do, I think, is look very carefully at the situation on the ground to see how each community fulfils its obligations, specifically with regard to multi-ethnicity, but also in other areas of good governance. We should then apply the concept of conditionality there as well. There are a number of municipalities that really deserve credit, including financial credit, and credit from international aid, when they go the extra mile specifically in relation to others. I would view the situation in such a differentiated way. The same is true, of course, at the central level. In a way, the benchmarks are the measure of whether things are fulfilled or not. No doubt, conditionality is one of the essential elements of our work. But I would propose that we think not only about negative conditionality but positive as well.

The work plan for further operationalization of the benchmarks was discussed. Let me say I agree fully with the statement just made by the Norwegian representative, who said that further specifics regarding implementation of the benchmarks must be worked out in cooperation with the local authorities, meaning the Provisional Institutions. I think that this is key, because we are now in a phase in which we hand over authority as far as we can, legally as well as technically. Also, when we have specific requirements, we have to act in cooperation with the institutions, and mainly the Government. That is surely right.

What we have tried to do today is to give the Council a first indicator on where we stand. Thus, we have a base line. The Council also has before it a document that, although it does not contain very new elements and follows the benchmarks with the sub-benchmarks already established last year, tries to tell you somehow where we are. This is a summary of a much bigger paper that we ourselves prepared within the Mission. The idea is that from now on we will report to the Council on where we go and what we achieve starting from this base line, so that we can be as concrete as possible on our progress towards fulfilling the benchmarks.

Concerning decentralization, I think that we need to be clear on what the parties themselves have requested. After the municipal elections, an agreement between all Kosovo leaders was reached, including the

Serb community and the head of the parliamentary faction in the Assembly, as well as Belgrade. I was quite happy about that. I spoke with President Kostunica, and he fully agreed to it. This is classic and typical work that should be done by the Council of Europe.

This is why, on the basis of a consensus between all the leaders of Kosovo and on the specific verbal, express recommendation of Belgrade, we have said: let this job be done by those who understand it. There is one institution that really has experience in decentralization, and that is the Council of Europe. On the basis of this consensus, we have invited the Council of Europe to come to Kosovo and take over the lead in this work. I am very glad that the Council of Europe and its Secretary-General, Mr. Schwimmer, immediately agreed to do so. I am also very glad that this coming Monday, we will have a permanent mission from the Council of Europe there doing nothing else but elaborating a concept on local self-government and decentralization.

This is exactly the right approach. We should now let the Council of Europe do its work, talk to all the parties, from the Provisional Government to the different representatives, specifically including, of course, those of the minorities, and then come up with a proposal. I cannot implement such a proposal ex officio. Of course, such a proposal must gain life in the reality of Kosovo, which means it must be discussed in the Provisional Institutions. If any legal conclusions are to be drawn from this, it must be done in cooperation with all the parties.

Let us continue on this road, which we have established on the basis of a consensus of all the parties. The Council of Europe is taking the lead, and it should now prepare a concept. This should be done as quickly as possible, but at the same time this is very far-reaching. The issue of decentralization goes very far in many aspects. Let them do their work, let them talk to all of the parties. Then we shall look at that and how we can implement the concept in the legitimate structures as they are established in Kosovo.

I would like to make a final point on substance, and that is the return and the numbers of returns. I would like to be very clear here. First of all, concerning what we achieved last year and what we hope to achieve this year, I think that we have the structures to prepare operationally for the return season, which starts in April and May, this year. We have the structures both on the local level — because return happens on the local level — as well as on the central level. We have the Serb coordinator for return in the Government. I have a senior adviser for return. Also important, we have, I think, the necessary money provided by the international community to prepare the projects, which are costly. This is because someone cannot simply be returned. There is a need for housing, education, economic prospects, access to infrastructures and the appropriate security. I think that the international community has provided for this. What we need is active cooperation from the local institutions.

The numbers were mentioned. I would just like to clarify here that all the numbers that we mentioned are not ours; they are the official figures of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR). Just to be very clear, the UNHCR's most recent numbers, summing up the situation as of 31 December 2002, say the returns in 2001 were 1,447 and the returns in 2002 were 2,671. In total, there are 6,024. These are not my numbers; they are the numbers of the UNHCR. We have to take something as an objective basis. We are just referring to official UNHCR numbers.

Concerning the outflow, nobody has the exact numbers, but there is common consent among the entire return community and the institutions concerned that the numbers are not high enough on returns because of the problems we still have that have been mentioned. But it is very clear that the number of returns this year was greater than the outflow in the past. Therefore, there is a positive development.

I have addressed the questions as I have recalled them. But let me say at the end that UNMIK understands itself to be an instrument of the Council. We are following its guidelines. We will continue to make proposals, but in the end it is very important that the Security Council set the guidelines and we try our best to fulfil them.

My impression from this discussion was that we are right to focus on the standards. We are right to focus this year on the three priorities, namely the economy and the job situation, crime and multi-ethnicity, including return.

I also detected here guidelines and instructions from the Council to intensify work on the transfer of

power, as I have proposed — that we should do everything we legally can not to reserve power but to transfer it to the institutions, but also that the institutions as well must make efforts to be in a position to exercise it.

I am very encouraged also that the Council seems to be in consensus in endorsing that we should now have a direct dialogue on questions of mutual interest between Pristina and Belgrade.

Finally, I think that it is fair to say that I have felt here also a consensus on the fact that regional integration — meaning integration into Europe — is an important perspective for all of the countries in Europe, and I am very grateful for the statement of the President, who expressed exactly that. The Summit in Thessaloniki on 21 June will be of particular importance there. I am very grateful for this continued support.

The President: I thank Mr. Steiner for the clarifications he has provided and for the explanations he has given us. We wish him well in his future work. I hope that, in the meeting that will immediately follow, we will be able to authorize a presidential statement that will give him the support that he just requested.

There are no further speakers inscribed on my list.

The Security Council has thus concluded the present stage of its consideration of the item on its agenda.

The meeting rose at 12.55 p.m.

United Nations S/PV.4703

Security Council

Fifty-eighth year

Provisional

4703rd meeting

Thursday, 6 February 2003, 12.55 p.m.

New York

President	Mr. Pleuger	(Germany)
Members	Angola	Mr. Gaspar Martins
	Bulgaria	Mr. Yakimov
	Cameroon	Mr. Belinga-Eboutou
	Chile	Mr. Maquieira
	China	Mr. Chen Xu
	France	Mrs. D'Achon
	Guinea	Mr. Boubacar Diallo
	Mexico	Mr. Pujalte
	Pakistan	Mr. Khalid
	Russian Federation	Mr. Gatilov
	Spain	Mrs. Menéndez
	Syrian Arab Republic	Mr. Mekdad
	United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland	Ms. Broughton
	United States of America	Mr. Delgado

Agenda

Security Council resolutions 1160 (1998), 1199 (1998), 1203 (1998), 1239 (1999) and 1244 (1999)

Report of the Secretary-General on the United Nations Interim Administration Mission in Kosovo (S/2003/113)

This record contains the text of speeches delivered in English and of the interpretation of speeches delivered in the other languages. The final text will be printed in the *Official Records of the Security Council*. Corrections should be submitted to the original languages only. They should be incorporated in a copy of the record and sent under the signature of a member of the delegation concerned to the Chief of the Verbatim Reporting Service, room C-154A.

03-23833 (E)

The meeting was called to order at 12.55 p.m.

Adoption of the agenda

The agenda was adopted.

Security Council resolutions 1160 (1998), 1199 (1998), 1203 (1998), 1239 (1999) and 1244 (1999)

Report of the Secretary-General on the United Nations Interim Administration Mission in Kosovo (S/2003/113)

The President: The Security Council will now begin its consideration of the item on its agenda.

After consultations among members of the Security Council, I have been authorized to make the following statement on behalf of the Council:

"The Security Council reaffirms its continued commitment to the full and effective implementation of United Nations Security Council resolution 1244 (1999). The Council notes the transformation of the Federal Republic of Yugoslavia into Serbia and Montenegro and, in this context, reaffirms that resolution 1244 (1999) remains fully valid in all its aspects. Resolution 1244 (1999) continues to be the basis of the international community's policy on Kosovo.

"The Security Council further reaffirms its commitment to the objective of a multi-ethnic and democratic Kosovo and calls upon all communities to work towards this goal and actively participate in the public institutions as well as the decision-making process, and integrate into society. It condemns all attempts to establish and maintain structures and institutions as well as initiatives that are inconsistent with resolution 1244 (1999) and the Constitutional Framework. The Council calls for the authority of the United Nations Interim Administration Mission in Kosovo (UNMIK) to be respected throughout Kosovo, and welcomes the establishment of UNMIK's authority in the northern part of Mitrovica. It encourages the establishment of direct dialogue between Pristina and Belgrade on issues of practical importance to both sides.

"The Security Council condemns the violence within the Kosovo Albanian community, as well as the violence against the Kosovo Serb community. It urges local institutions and leaders to exert influence on the climate for the rule of law by condemning all violence and actively supporting the efforts of the police and the judiciary. It underlines the responsibility of the majority to make the minority communities feel that Kosovo is their home too, and that the laws apply equally to everyone. The minority community representatives must join and work within the institutions to benefit from them. The Council stresses that all communities must make renewed efforts to inject momentum into improving inter-ethnic dialogue and promoting the reconciliation process, not least through full cooperation with the International Criminal Tribunal for the former Yugoslavia.

"The Security Council welcomes the report of the Secretary-General on the activities of UNMIK and recent developments in Kosovo (S/2003/113) and the briefing of the Special Representative of the Secretary-General on the status of implementation of the benchmarks for Kosovo. The Council reiterates its full support for the 'Standards before Status' policy with postulated targets in the eight key areas: functioning of the democratic institutions, the rule of law, freedom of movement, the return of refugees and IDPs, economy, property rights, dialogue with Belgrade, and the Kosovo Protection Corps. The Council welcomes the presentation of a detailed plan for its implementation that will provide the appropriate baseline against which progress can be measured, as discussed with the Special Representative of the Secretary-General during the Council's mission in December 2002. The fulfilment of these targets is essential to commencing a political process designed to determine Kosovo's future, in accordance with resolution 1244 (1999). The Council strongly rejects unilateral initiatives which may jeopardize stability and the normalization process not only in Kosovo but also in the entire region. It urges all political leaders in Kosovo and in the region to shoulder responsibility for democratization, peace and stability in the region by rejecting all initiatives contravening resolution 1244 (1999). The Council rejects any attempts to exploit the question of the future of Kosovo for other political ends.

"The Security Council welcomes progress made in 2002, as outlined in the Secretary-General's report. It supports the Special Representative of the Secretary-General's continued efforts, including in such priority areas as revitalizing the economy through investment, combating crime and illegal trafficking, and building a multi-ethnic society, while ensuring conditions for the sustainable return of refugees and IDPs.

"The Security Council welcomes the Special Representative of the Secretary-General's intention to transfer remaining competencies to the Provisional Institutions of Self-Government (PISG) by the end of the year, except those reserved for the Special Representative of the Secretary-General under resolution 1244 (1999).

It calls on the Kosovo PISG as well as all Kosovars to take on their responsibilities and genuinely cooperate for this transfer to be successful.

"The Security Council reiterates its full support for the Special Representative of the Secretary-General and urges Kosovo's leaders once again to work in close cooperation with UNMIK and the international Security Presence (KFOR) for a better future for Kosovo and stability in the region."

This statement will be issued as a document of the Security Council under the symbol S/PRST/2003/1.

The Security Council has thus concluded the present stage of its consideration of the item on its agenda.

The meeting rose at 1.05 p.m.

United Nations S/PV.4704

Security Council

Fifty-eighth year

Provisional

4704th meeting

Thursday, 13 February 2003, 10 a.m.

New York

President	Mr. Pleuger	(Germany)
Members	Angola	Mr. Lucas
	Bulgaria	Mr. Tafrov
	Cameroon	Mr. Belinga-Eboutou
	Chile	Mr. Valdes
	China	Mr. Wang Yingfan
	France	Mrs. D'Achon
	Guinea	Mr. Traoré
	Mexico	Mrs. Arce de Jeannet
	Pakistan	Mr. Khalid
	Russian Federation	Mr. Gatilov
	Spain	Mr. Arias
	Syrian Arab Republic	Mr. Wehbe
	United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland	Sir Jeremy Greenstock
	United States of America	Mr. Williamson

Agenda

The situation in the Middle East, including the Palestinian question

This record contains the text of speeches delivered in English and of the interpretation of speeches delivered in the other languages. The final text will be printed in the *Official Records of the Security Council*. Corrections should be submitted to the original languages only. They should be incorporated in a copy of the record and sent under the signature of a member of the delegation concerned to the Chief of the Verbatim Reporting Service, room C-154A.

03-24603 (E)

The meeting was called to order at 10.10 a.m.

Adoption of the agenda

The agenda was adopted.

The situation in the Middle East, including the Palestinian question

The President: In accordance with the understanding reached in the Council's prior consultations, and in the absence of objection, I shall take it that the Security Council agrees to extend an invitation under rule 39 of its provisional rules of procedure to Mr. Kieran Prendergast, Under-Secretary-General for Political Affairs.

It is so decided.

The Security Council will now begin its consideration of the item on its agenda. The Security Council is meeting in accordance with the understanding reached in its prior consultations.

At this meeting, the Security Council will hear a briefing by Mr. Kieran Prendergast, Under-Secretary-General for Political Affairs. I now give him the floor.

Mr. Prendergast: Since my last briefing to the Council on 16 January, violence between Israelis and Palestinians has continued unabated, resulting in further loss of life, in injury and in destruction. Moreover, the humanitarian crisis in the occupied Palestinian territories is worsening.

On the political side, parliamentary elections were held in Israel on 28 January, resulting in a substantial increase in seats for the Likud party, which is led by Prime Minister Ariel Sharon. Mr. Sharon has been requested by President Katzav to form a new Government. The new Israeli Government can be assured of the cooperation and full support of the international community if it takes steps that would move the Israeli-Palestinian conflict towards the two-State solution envisaged in Security Council resolution 1397 (2002), through which peace and security can be achieved for both peoples.

We welcome reports about a private meeting last week between Prime Minister Sharon and the Speaker of the Palestinian Legislative Council, Mr. Ahmed Qurei, known as Abu Ala. This will hopefully mark the beginning of a renewed dialogue between the Government of Israel and the Palestinian Authority towards reaching a ceasefire understanding, which would greatly assist progress towards restoring trust and dialogue between the parties.

Without the prospect of some forward movement on the political front, it is difficult to envisage how the current cycle of violence and counter-violence can be stopped. As I have already indicated, the violence in the region has intensified, with deaths mounting day by day. Since my last briefing, 65 Palestinians and 7 Israelis have been killed, bringing the death toll since the outbreak of the second intifada in September 2000 to more than 2,300 Palestinians and nearly 700 Israelis. The Secretary-General is deeply disturbed at this mounting death toll, and he is gravely concerned for the future of both the Israeli and Palestinian peoples, as well as for the wider Middle East region, if death and destruction are not replaced by peace and reconciliation.

Developments in the past month give little cause for optimism and no room at all for complacency. On 25 January, after a number of Qassam rockets were fired by Palestinians on Israeli communities inside and outside the Gaza Strip, the Israel Defence Forces (IDF) entered Gaza City in their biggest operation in the Gaza Strip since September 2000. That Israeli incursion left 13 Palestinians dead and scores injured.

As has been stated in previous briefings, Palestinian civilians often bear the brunt of Israel's military operations. Israel has the right to defend itself, but it must do so within the parameters of international law. As the occupying Power, Israel has particular responsibilities, which are clearly defined and set out in the Fourth Geneva Convention. Regrettably, Israel's actions are all too often at odds with those responsibilities. We are concerned, for example, by the continuing Israeli policy of demolition of Palestinian homes. In the Hebron area, the IDF incursion of 30 January resulted in the demolition of 22 Palestinian houses in and around the city. The IDF announced that on 3, 4 and 8 February, four houses were demolished in, respectively, Beit Furik in the Nablus area, the Muassi refugee camp in central Gaza and Nablus city. These demolitions are, in our view, measures of collective punishment that are violations of international humanitarian law and breaches of Israel's obligations as the occupying Power.

During the same incursion in Hebron on 30 January, Israeli bulldozers also levelled 100 stalls in the Hebron market. Earlier, on 21 January, the IDF had demolished 62 shops and market stalls in the Palestinian village of Nazlat Issa, in the Tulkarem area.

Since my last briefing, attacks by Palestinian groups have claimed the lives of seven Israelis, including one civilian. Israel continues to report interceptions of suicide bombers attempting to enter Israeli territory. The Secretary-General has consistently and repeatedly condemned terrorist attacks as morally repugnant. They are also counter-productive, because terrorism undermines the pursuit of legitimate Palestinian national aspirations and is an obstacle to the resumption of a sustainable peace process.

We have welcomed the efforts of the Government of Egypt, through meetings it has hosted in Cairo, to encourage talks among Palestinian groups on adopting a ceasefire. We call on all concerned parties to do whatever they can to facilitate the continuation and fruitful conclusion of this dialogue.

On 16 January, I told the Council that

> "there has been no appreciable improvement in the humanitarian situation in the occupied Palestinian territory since the previous briefing, and Israel still has not fulfilled the commitments it made to the Secretary-General's Personal Humanitarian Envoy last August". (*S/PV.4685, p. 3*)

Unfortunately, stringent closures and curfews continue to cause the deterioration of economic conditions in the West Bank and Gaza Strip and to hamper the work of the international donor community. Again, I take this opportunity to remind Israel, as the occupying Power, of its obligations and responsibilities under the Fourth Geneva Convention for the well-being of the Palestinian population.

While the humanitarian situation continues to deteriorate, the capacity of the international community to respond to growing needs among Palestinians is, unfortunately, eroding. The Commissioner-General of the United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East (UNRWA), Mr. Peter Hansen, has warned that by the end of next month his organization will be in danger of running out of resources for its emergency activities in the West Bank and Gaza Strip. Today, UNRWA is feeding 1.1 million people in the occupied Palestinian territory. This crisis has occurred because UNRWA's appeal for $94 million to replenish its dwindling emergency fund has gone largely unheeded.

We call on the international community to respond generously to UNRWA's appeal so as to prevent a diminution of its capacity to continue to answer growing calls for assistance. Although the primary solution to the humanitarian crisis in the West Bank and Gaza Strip lies in the lifting of curfews and closures so as to facilitate the resumption of economic life in the occupied Palestinian territory, donor support for UNRWA's appeal is essential for meeting immediate needs.

I ought to say that there are a few tentative positive signs of hope amidst this very bleak picture. The Palestinian reform process continues to progress, with the active support of the international community. Prime Minister Blair's meeting in London last month on the issue of Palestinian reform will be followed by a further series of meetings. These will include: first, meetings of Quartet envoys; secondly, a capitals-level donor Ad Hoc Liaison Committee meeting on international assistance to the Palestinian people; and, thirdly, meetings of the Task Force on Palestinian Reform. All of these meetings will take place in London between 18 and 20 February. The United Nations and other participants hope to build on the success of the January meeting in order to inject new impetus into the reform process, as well as into the efforts of the donor nations to address the humanitarian crisis.

The United Nations Special Coordinator for the Middle East Peace Process and Personal Representative of the Secretary-General to the Palestinian Authority, Mr. Terje Roed-Larsen, and two of his fellow Quartet envoys, Ambassador Moratinos of the European Union and Ambassador Vdovin of the Russian Federation, met on 11 February with Chairman Arafat and senior officials of the Palestinian Authority. They discussed the upcoming London meetings, and called on Chairman Arafat to take bold and immediate steps to support and facilitate institutional and security reform ahead of those meetings. Representatives of the Quartet will be having follow-up meetings with Mr. Arafat and other senior Palestinian officials later this week. Mr. Roed-Larsen has also remained in close contact on this issue with senior officials in Israel and neighbouring countries.

Turning to other developments since the previous briefing to the Council, I ought to say there has been an increase in tension along the Blue Line. On 21 January, after almost five months of relative calm, Hezbollah targeted IDF positions in the Shab'a farms area with mortars and missiles, obviously in clear violation of the Blue Line. The IDF responded shortly afterwards, leading, regrettably, to one Lebanese civilian being killed and another wounded.

I would like to note once again that the Secretary-General confirmed and the Security Council endorsed in June 2000 that Israel had withdrawn its forces from Lebanon, in accordance with Security Council resolution 425 (1978). Both Israel and Lebanon pledged to respect the line identified by the United Nations for this purpose, commonly referred to as the Blue Line. The Lebanese Government should therefore fulfil its responsibility to maintain calm along the entire length of the Line. We have noted the increased deployment of the Lebanese Joint Security Forces in the south, and we hope that this reflects a commitment by the Lebanese authorities to ensure calm.

Israeli warplanes continue to violate the Blue Line and Lebanese airspace on a regular basis. Various sources, including the United Nations Interim Force in Lebanon, have indicated that the last week of January witnessed a marked increase in the number of these overflights. Israeli jets were reported to have flown at low altitudes over populated areas. The Government of Lebanon protested to the United Nations about these violations of its airspace. These Israeli overflights, and the anti-aircraft fire they draw, carry a potential for escalation, especially in the currently tense regional situation.

I should also mention that the Wazzani/Hasbani water issue continues to be a source of tension and possible escalation between Lebanon and Israel. The Government of Lebanon has expressed its willingness to find a negotiated solution through the good offices of the Secretary-General. The Government of Israel, however, has not yet expressed its wish to use the good offices of the United Nations in order to reach an agreement between the two sides on the use of water in this area. Meanwhile, we call on the Government of Lebanon to continue to respect its commitments not to expand its water projects beyond what is already stated in its report until the matter comes to a resolution.

Last month, I briefed the Council on the shooting incident on 8 January in the Golan Heights, which resulted in the death of a Syrian soldier. I would like to commend both Israel and Syria on their handling of that incident, which they did not allow to escalate. However, the incident has served as a reminder of the great sensitivity of the Golan area. Both sides must act with the utmost caution and with full respect for the terms of the disengagement agreement. I am sure that they will do so. Both sides should also refrain from actions that could jeopardize the status quo and create further friction.

At this particularly precarious time across the Middle East, I would like to urge all parties to exercise maximum restraint in their words and deeds. Every effort must be made to enhance stability and, correspondingly, to avoid actions that could contribute to a further destabilization of present conditions.

The situation in the Middle East remains very serious. Despite this, the best path towards ensuring the security of Israelis and Palestinians, and achieving a comprehensive regional peace, remains moving forward with the Quartet's road map. The road map's approach of addressing the inextricably linked issues of security, political progress and economic development in parallel would enable progress in each area to buttress progress in the others. We remain convinced that the early implementation of the road map would break the current stalemate and allow Israelis and Palestinians actively to pursue their legitimate aspirations at the negotiating table. Through this process, the parties could realize the vision of two States — Israel and an independent, viable, sovereign and democratic Palestine — living side by side in peace and security.

The longer implementation of this vision is delayed, the farther apart Israel and the Palestinians will move and the longer it will take for them to build the trust and confidence that is a prerequisite for their mutual security and, ultimately, for a just and comprehensive settlement. The realization of this vision is entirely dependent on the political will of the parties. But it is also incumbent on the international community and on the Quartet, individually and collectively, consistently to encourage the parties to embrace this vision and the road map wholeheartedly.

The President: I thank the Under-Secretary-General for his comprehensive briefing.

In accordance with the understanding reached in the Council's prior consultations, I should now like to invite Council members to informal consultations to continue our discussion on the subject.

The meeting rose at 10.30 a.m.